

WRITING WOMAN'S EMPIRE:
IMPERIALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN FEMININITY IN
ANTEBELLUM LITERARY DISCOURSE

A Dissertation

by

SEUNG HEE LEE

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Chair of Committee,	Dennis Berthold
Committee Members,	John. J. McDermott
	Marco Portales
	Nandini Bhattacharya
Head of Department,	Nancy Warren

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the interplay between the language of empire and femininity in antebellum literary culture by focusing on texts that offer gendered meanings of America as a new empire in their depiction and imagination of the types of femininity the novelty of the land would give rise to. Where Amy Kaplan's "Manifest Domesticity" posits that the imperial subjectivity of white women took shape in and through the language of domesticity during the time of Manifest Destiny, I start by showing that the imperial construction of white femininity began earlier in the Revolutionary period by revisiting the tenet of Republican Motherhood. In the first chapter, I discuss how the colonial context shapes the question of the divided American female subject in *Wieland*, the very first text by the first professional American novelist, Charles Brockden Brown. *Wieland* portrays America as the place where the enlightened white female subject transforms itself through the contact with savage otherness both from within and without. The new type of female subjectivity that Brown depicts as arising from the nation that continuously expands its borders and expels the original inhabitants is the divided subject whose inner psychological terrain resembles and mirrors the exterior terrain—a subject that uncannily anticipates Gloria Anzaldúa's borderland subject. Using Anzaldúa's theory, I trace how Brown disrupts the equation of whiteness with rationality to question white ownership of the land. If C.B. Brown treats white femininity as the site of colonial confusion and anxiety, Lydia Maria Child and Margaret Fuller cast it as the major imperial source for the nation by rewriting the

national history as the story of woman's empire and fusing utopian hope for a better world for women with the nation's imperial aspirations. Chapter two discusses *Hobomok* where Child opposes masculine forms of colonial venture to offer feminine forms of colonization as more humane and effective ways of building an empire by feminizing sentimentality. Chapter three traces the development of Fuller's imperialism from *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* to *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. I revise the previous understanding that the two texts represent Fuller's growing criticism of the American empire by showing that Fuller does not so much disapprove of her nation's imperial progress as attempt to elevate it through the moral source of white women. Chapter four examines the intersection between emancipation and empire that underwrites the plot of the first Afro-American novel, *Clotel*. William Wells Brown criticizes the notion of America as a woman's empire, but he still reproduces the discourse of white women's moral power and its attendant imperial claims to enlist their support. Rather than giving white women's moral duty a nationalist cast, however, *Clotel* puts it in the transatlantic context of the emancipationist politics of the British Empire.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1776, the year the Continental Congress formally declared America's independence from Great Britain, young Reverend Timothy Dwight who would later become the president of Yale, celebrated the bright future of the newly born nation whose "political, as well as natural advantages promise in this western world, the excellence of the greatest empire the hand of time ever raised up to view" (44). In 1783, the year the United States finally attained its independence from the British Empire, George Washington called the new republic a "rising Empire" (Schlesinger 43). Dwight celebrated the Revolution as opening a new history of empire: "This is an event, which, since the building of Babel, till the present time, the sun never saw. That a vast continent, containing near three thousand millions of acres of valuable land, should be inhabited by a people in all respects one, is indeed a novelty on earth" (45). With the victory of the war, Washington declared that "[t]he citizens of America, placed in the most enviable condition, as the lords and proprietors of a vast tract of continent, comprehending all the various soils and climates of the world . . . are now, by the late satisfactory pacification, acknowledged to be possessed of absolute freedom and independence" ("A Circular Letter" 388). Through the victorious war Americans proved themselves as the great colonizers of the rising "empire" that marks the beginning of a new epoch in history: "The foundation of our empire was not laid in the gloomy age of

ignorance and superstition, but at an epocha[sic] when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined, than at any former period” (“A Circular Letter” 388)¹.

The new nation came into being by those who struggled to assert themselves as the builders of “an impire [sic] in many ways the most interesting in the world” in the words of Alexander Hamilton (qtd. in Immerman 1). Washington believed that although his nation might be an “infant empire” yet, “there will assuredly come a day when this country will have some weight in the scale of Empires” (“To Marquis de Lafayette”). The story of the birth of the new republic is also a story of the creation of a new national identity—a process, even a contest, about what shape “Americans” would assume. If all nations depend on powerful constructions of a national identity, that is, if

¹ I follow Walter Nugent’s claim that the War of Independence should be seen as an imperialist war in the sense that America could win not only the national autonomy of the original rebelling thirteen colonies but also the vast land that they “had no solid legal claim to” (39). In other words, it was also the war over the imperial ownership of the continent. America’s westward movement should therefore be seen as a colonizing process rather than just a national expansion. He further explains that Americans were ready to assert their colonial rights during the war because of their imperialist aspirations or the “deep belief that America had a right to all that land” (40). Thus built on the imperialist desire, the “habits of empire,” according to Nugent, have formed its people as well as the American empire. The history of America, for Nugent, is also the history of various means to empire or “how Americans acquired each parcel of real estate: by diplomacy, filibustering, armed conquest, cheating and lying, ethnic cleansing, even honest purchase and negotiation” (xiv). Richard H. Immerman also corrects the traditional understanding of American imperial power emerging only during and after the Spanish-American (1889) and Phillippine-American wars (1899-1901) through his study of the nation’s imperial policies from the time of Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz. Although the methods of expansion and maintenance of empire have changed over time, “America is and always has been an empire” (Immerman 13).

a nation “only reproduces itself as a nation to the extent that, through a network of apparatuses and daily practices, the individual is instituted as *homo nationalis*” (Balibar 93), America had to construct a new national subject fit for its imperial project. That a new national subject emerged out of the process of the early American empire building was male and exclusively white fraught with the contradictions inherent in American imperialism itself has been sufficiently pointed out. The discursive intersections of empire and gender during the time when significant changes in American understandings of gender relations happened, however, have received less scrutiny. The Revolutionary period was not just the time when the new imperial identity emerged; “[m]any widespread and characteristically American assumptions about gender relations stem from the colonial and revolutionary period” too (Bloch, *Gender and Morality* 10). Revisions in the understanding of the imperial and colonial origin of the nation did not lead to the renewed understanding of the origin of the American concepts of gender yet.

If “the American Revolution was an important catalyst for . . . new attitudes by and about women” (Bloch, *Gender and Morality* 12), was the emergence of those new attitudes part of the imperial history of the nation too? To what extent were the narratives about empire crucial to the formation of female subjectivity? In what way or manner does the discourse of imperialism infiltrate and complicate the literary representation and imagination of women of the United States? My study answers these questions by exploring the intersections between the antebellum literary discourse on women and the evolving discourse of the American Empire, beginning from Charles

Brockden Brown's *Wieland* to the texts by two renowned antebellum woman reformists, Lydia Maria Child and Margaret Fuller, and ending with William Wells Brown's *Clotel*. These writers offer the gendered perspective of the meanings of America as a new empire by exploring and imagining what type of femininity the novelty of the land would give rise to. My title, *Writing Woman's Empire*, also suggests that the narratives about women studied here are also the narratives about the empire that produces, is produced, and sometimes disrupted by its women. The writers in this study, in other words, were writing about empire by writing about women's relation to it—the relation that is always mediated by intervening systems of ideas, symbols, and values. Some of the most influential ideas and values that structured the discourse of femininity were termed “Republican Motherhood,” “empire of the mother,” and “Manifest Domesticity.”

From Republican Motherhood to Manifest Domesticity

As the term coined by Amy Kaplan to refer to ideological connection between Manifest Destiny and the cult of domesticity that casts home as the “empire of the mother,” Manifest Domesticity refers to the conception of domesticity as a site for imperial female subjectivity whose “civilizing” influence is put into service of the expansion of the nation. The term locates the construction of female imperial subjectivity between the 1830s and 1850s. According to Kaplan, it was during the period when the white middleclass home became the place for Manifest Destiny or “the engine of national expansion, the site from which the nation reaches beyond itself through the emanation of woman's moral influence” (Kaplan 29). But the process of

“cast[ing] the image of the nation as a home delimited by race, and the image of the nation as propelled outward through imperial female agency” (40) began earlier than Kaplan suggests. Even before the term Manifest Destiny was coined in 1845, Euro-Americans thought of themselves as the builders of an empire. Even before the “ideologists [of both domesticity and Manifest Destiny] reimagined the nation as home during a period of massive and violent expansion into Mexico and the Indian lands” (19), writers of Republican Motherhood developed an ideological configuration of America as a metonymic extension of white middleclass homes.

In her pioneering study that redefined women’s history in the United States, Linda Kerber has coined the term “Republican Motherhood” to capture a sentiment promoted and widely endorsed in the Revolutionary era: the idea that women should be educated in order to be virtuous mothers so that they can train their sons to be virtuous republican citizens. If the survival of the new Republic depended on the reproduction of a virtuous and independent citizenry, women could be seen as making the most important political contribution to the nation in reproducing generations of republican men. Kerber insightfully connects the construction of gender with the construction of nation by showing how in the new nation the ideal of motherhood was defined in terms of the national ideal of the republican virtues, but fails to note the imperial and racial construction that inheres within the concept of the Republican Mother. The “postwar cult of republican motherhood” according to Michelle Burnham, “functions. . . as at once a resolution to the crisis of an absent imperial mother and the source of a new

conception of American national power that had to evade the classical association of power with corruption” (Burnham 72-3). To Burnham’s suggestion that the emergence of Republican Motherhood reflects the postcolonial process of dealing with the anxiety about losing the maternal tutelage of the British Empire, I’d add that the creators of the language of Republican Motherhood did so by asserting American women’s claim to empire. If the War of Independence was also an imperialist war as several historians point out, the women who participated in the war depicted themselves as helping the newly born nation expand its “empire.” Comparing the critical moment of America to that of the Roman Empire that was “saved from the fury of a victorious enemy by the efforts of Volumnia, and other Roman ladies,” the author of *Sentiments of an American Woman* (1780) urged American women to contribute to the Revolution. Anticipating the rhetoric of American imperialism that turns the territorial and imperial expansion into “extending the sphere of liberty” (Immerman 3), the broadside also represents American women as imperial rulers fighting for liberty: “Born for liberty, disdaining to bear the irons of a tyrannic Government, we associate ourselves to the grandeur of those Sovereigns, cherished and revered, who have had with so much splendor the scepter of the great States, The Batildas, the Elizabeths, the Maries, the Catherines, who have extended the empire of liberty.” Like American men fighting the war against the British tyranny, American women are against “a tyrannic Government.” Although they are “Born for liberty,” they also aspire for an imperial power that could be assumed only when your subjects are willing to give up their liberty. Ironically, in order to promote liberty and win the war against British imperialism, American women should be *more*

imperialistic than the opponent. America, in other words, is not just an opponent of imperialism but also a worthy heir of European empires.

During the war white American women cast their patriotism in the language of empire. After the war, white femininity emerges as a site through which U.S. imperial identity and power were figured. With the birth of the new republic, the long-established pictorial representation that has been used as a symbol of America—a naked Indian woman—was replaced by Columbia, a newly created symbol for the new republic. Kerber links the emergence of Columbia to the emergence of Republican Motherhood and the concurrent reversion of gendered meaning of virtue. Before the Revolution, “female qualities were commonly made the measure of what a good republican ought to avoid” because it was imagined that female corruption was threatening male republican virtue (Kerber 31). The emergence of Columbia as an allegorical figure that symbolizes virtue and liberty indicates the inversion of the gendered thinking of virtue in the new republic and the new conception of politicized maternal role. But the virtue that Columbia was supposed to protect was not purely republican but racial too. The whiteness of Columbia functions to prevent white Americans’ “newly born American identity from ‘bleeding into an American Indian identity’” (Schlereth 942). Columbia’s replacement of the voluptuous Indian woman as an iconographic symbol of America replicates the racial logic of Republican Motherhood. It is not difficult to see that who Kerber refers to as “American women” are in fact *white* American women. If white mothers were the reproducers of “true” American values, one could easily marginalize

the children of original inhabitants of the land as non-Americans. Republican Mother's home imbued with civic values is a domesticity that can come into being only by erasing nonwhite Americans from the moral imaginary of the nation. In her formulation of how "American women" became republican mothers, in other words, Kerber unwittingly repeats the imperialist logic of exclusion that characterized the ideology of Republican Motherhood.

As Caucasian Columbia takes the iconographic place of the naked Indian princess, that is, as the nation newly constructs itself in the image of an ideal republican mother demurely garbed and surrounded by her white children, it could also represent itself not as being born in revolutionary violence but through the peaceful maternal ascension. As a figure that feminizes Columbus's violent and masculine imperial potency, Columbia also epitomizes the impulse to render imperial violence invisible. The iconographic evolution of Columbia in the following period mirrors how white femininity became the site through which the violence of expanding imperial territories is turned into a peaceful and civilizing movement. As it is well exemplified in John Gast's "American Progress" (1872) in which Columbia wearing the "star of empire" on her forehead floats westward, carrying a school book in her right hand and wires of the telegraph in her left hand, American enlightenment and civilization were often gendered female in the nineteenth century. Thus personified as a peaceful and female movement of progress, Gast's pictorial representation of American expansion erases the history of violence. If the "myth of regeneration through violence became the structuring

metaphor of the American experience” (Slotkin 5), I argue that Euro-American women became seen as regenerating (or even erasing) the male violence of imperial confrontation through their female influence. As American women were constructed as imperial subjects whose civilizing and enlightening influence shapes “American progress,” America could also be depicted as an empire that is not created through violent conquests but exemplary moral values.

White Femininity and Gendering American Imperialism

White femininity constitutes the site through which the nation writes the idealized vision of an American empire as free from violence—a vision that can be conjured up only through the denial of the brutal reality of territorial expansion. The cultural work of rendering imperial violence invisible is sometimes performed and other times exposed by the writers studied here. My study examines the ways in which they investigate, reinforce, or disrupt the imperial construction of white femininity as both the symbol and agent of national virtue. As the locus through which the nation represents white civilizing force, white femininity also offers the site through which the writers in this study produce, transmit, interrogate, and sometimes challenge the national narratives of empire. When C.B. Brown wrote his first novel subtitled, “An American Tale,” for instance, he explores the colonial condition for the new nation by exploring how the displaced voice of Indians can invade the psychological terrain of his white heroine. Both Child and Fuller create the utopian/imperial possibilities of the nation by imagining an empire built through white women’s sentimental and

regenerative force. The representative female reformists of their time, both Child and Fuller promote interracial sympathy and oppose racial violence. In appealing to women's innate moral power, however, they do not so much oppose imperialism as feminize it; as far as America is under the moral guidance of women's heart, it is in the right path to empire.

The ways in which Child and Fuller construct imperial womanhood by appealing to white women's sympathetic power towards the other races complicate our understanding about white women's imperial subjectivity. According to Kaplan, the heroines in the domestic novels gain imperial subjectivity by performing the "work of purging both themselves and their homes of foreignness" (47). But both Child and Fuller provide a model of female imperial subjectivity that does not require white women to overcome their affinity to racial others by way of "purging." If anything, white women's ability to feel closer to the Indian than white men makes them better colonizers for such sympathetic power would enable them to colonize both the land and the original inhabitants without violence. My analysis of Child and Fuller attempts to complicate some of the large generalizations scholars have been making about white femininity as the locus through which borders of race and nationality are guarded and secured.

Elaborating on Kaplan's insights into the intertwined politics of domesticity and imperialism, I also look into different discursive sites through which feminized narratives about imperial progress are constructed. The centrality of domesticity in

shaping the female subjectivity during the antebellum period is undeniable, but women writers could also invoke different discourses and tropes to engage in the ongoing process of the formation of American imperialism. Interracial romance provides the plot through which Child expresses her colonial fantasy about the Indian. Fuller produces an imperial narrative that is about time as well as space through her gendered revision of post-millennialism.

Most importantly, they both employ the conception of the new world as the place for the new history of women. From the beginning of the early republic writers often praised the elevated condition of American women whose status as “the rational companions of men, not their playthings or slaves” (qtd. in Merish 60) to claim the superiority of New World virtue over Old World corruption. Claiming that Europe became too corrupt to realize republican values, many post-revolutionary writers depicted Americans as *the* people embodying the glorious republican tradition. The eighteenth century American writers “regularly employed the trope of consensual, voluntary domestic union to figure a regenerate American collectivity” (Merish 60). In order to flaunt the freedom that American citizens enjoy, writers often celebrated the American home as the space where women can be as free as they want to be unlike women from the different part of the world who are enslaved under male tyranny. America, in short, was conceived as “a woman’s terrestrial Paradise” (qtd. in Merish 60) as an anonymous author in *The Universal Asylum* has put it. “This idea of the increased social mobility and respect for American women” that “constituted part of the national

mythology throughout the nineteenth century” (Merish 60) gets blended with imperialism in the writings of Child and Fuller as they rewrite the national history as the story of woman’s empire. The new world, for these writers, is the new land where women can fulfill their imperial power. Fusing utopian hope for a better world for women with the nation’s imperial aspiration, these writers show that the alliance between white feminism and imperialism was long in the making. Tracing the developments of the white feminist discourse from 1870 to 1920, Louise M. Newman suggests that it was during this period that white feminist discourse consolidated the rhetoric of American imperialism abroad and racial hierarchy at home by calling for more participation from Anglo-Protestant women in civilizing missions. I suggest, however, that the process of formation of imperial female identity began earlier than the emergence of the organized feminist movement.

I use the term, “imperialism” as opposed to “colonialism” in the title of this study to suggest that it discusses the literary *culture* of the American empire as opposed to the physical process of imperial expansion and control. According to Edward Said, “‘imperialism’ means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center,” while “colonialism” is the process of “the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (9). As imperialism refers to the cultural practice of empire as opposed to the establishment of empires by the active colonization of territories, imperialism both precedes empire and “lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic,

and social practices” (9). Colonialism, however, ends with the liberation of colonies. Following Said’s distinction that imperialism exists far beyond the geographical reign of an empire, I also revise his definition of colonialism to include not just the territorial process of colonization but also ideas about and rationale for the colonial enterprise, that is, cultural dialogues relating to colonization, that do not survive long enough to gain longstanding cultural currency. I use the term, “colonialism,” and “colonial” for the ideas and situations that are more immediately related to specific conditions of colonization. When describing Fuller’s first encounters with Indians who were being displaced, for example, I use the adjective “colonial,” but when I trace her philosophical development on the American empire, I use “imperial.” Although my study aspires to examine the continuing legacy of imperialist thinking, it does not necessarily exclude the ideas that were not widely influential. The colonial policy of interracial marriage of the French and Spanish empires, for example, was never implemented in the U.S., but the idea itself was pondered upon by Jefferson and Child. As their attitude about interracial marriage was never widely adopted by the American public, I call the sentimental fantasy underwriting their view “sentimental colonialism” in chapter two. Colonialism might differ from imperialism in terms of its continuity and cultural force, but they are both committed to the reproduction of racial hierarchies and the sense of imperial superiorities among white people as Said points out:

There was a commitment to them [imperialism and colonialism] over and above profit, a commitment in constant circulation and recirculation, which,

on the one hand, allowed decent men and women to accept the notion that distant territories and their native peoples *should* be subjugated, and on the other, replenished metropolitan energies so that these decent people could think of the *imperium* as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples. (10)

Certain colonial ideas might not exist anymore, but they can still provide a powerful route to unearth the racial logic that sustains empire.

This study coincidentally starts and ends with the two male writers who are unified in name. If “by assuming a female narrative voice in *Wieland* and *Ormond* [Brown’s second novel], Charles Brockden Brown tacitly declares his allegiance to a native literary tradition in which women figure as important precursors” (Stern 21), the first Afro-American novel by W.W. Brown, born out of the discursive exchange with white women’s sentimental abolitionist fictions, was also his first foray into “the market for women’s fiction” (duCille, *The Coupling Convention* 28). C.B. Brown sent the copy of his first novel to Jefferson, and W.W. Brown wrote about Jefferson’s illegitimate daughters. These coincidences suggest that the narratives about women’s relation to the American “empire for liberty” were *not* exclusively performed by women writers but the ongoing process or even contest into which different genders and races participated.

I begin the study by looking at how C.B. Brown exposes colonial anxieties behind the ideology of Republican Motherhood through a distressed female voice. Possessing the ideal characteristics of the young American nation—young, beautiful,

independent, and virtuous—the heroine of *Wieland* is also a staunch believer in Republican Motherhood and its major “argument that an appropriate education would steel girls to face adversity” (Kerber 272). Education, however, proves to be futile for it cannot protect both a woman and her home from foreign invasion. When the nation was expressing the regenerative force of the new world through the image of white womanhood, Brown chooses to explore the confusion and turmoil arising from the mind of a model republican woman. The new type of female subjectivity that Brown depicts as arising from the nation that continuously expands its borders and expels the original inhabitants is the divided subject whose inner psychological terrain resembles and mirrors the exterior terrain—a subject that uncannily anticipates Gloria Anzaldúa’s borderland subject. I trace how the heroine becomes aware of the internalized split between the colonizer and colonized within her own self through her contact with the savage otherness that the villain of the novel—Carwin—represents.

Where Brown sees that the true understanding of a white female self could only be arrived at through her relation to the racialized other that Carwin embodies, in *Hobomok* Child constructs a white female imperial subject through the heroine’s power to build interracial sympathy with an Indian. Chapter 2 discusses how Child contrasts women’s colonizing influence based on sympathetic power to the masculine manner of colonization in a way that feminizes sentimentality. I treat Jefferson’s sentimental views on the Indian as an intertext for *Hobomok*. Whereas Jefferson’s white paternalism casts the race relation in terms of sentimentalized patriarchy, Child depicts Puritan men as

utterly incapable of sentimentality. Whereas Lydia Maria Child opposes masculine forms of colonial venture by depicting the heroine's father as a narrow-minded patriarch whose religious conviction tears his wife and daughter away from their home to the hardships of life in the wilderness, she offers feminine forms of colonization as more humane and effective ways of building an empire. Female influence is essential to empire building as it is only through women's sentimental colonization that "the American empire" (Child 100) could emanate its civilizing power.

Margaret Fuller further extends the reasoning that women's civilizing influence is indispensable in empire building in her conception of America as an empire that regenerates the world by bringing it closer to the millennial future. Chapter 3 examines how Fuller develops a temporal thinking about empire from *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* to *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. I first trace Fuller's struggle between her colonial guilt about the Indians she encountered during her trip and her faith in the utopian promise of America in *Summer*. Troubled by the morally untenable imperial progress of her nation she witnesses in the West, Fuller assumes a moral authority through the language of sentimentality to instruct her fellow citizens so that they can be better colonizers. Fuller also invokes the tropes of temporality that cast American imperial progress as the conquest of time as opposed to land, reproducing the temporal imperial discourse of her time. Anglo-Americans might not be the right owners of the land, but the future belongs to them whereas the superannuated race cannot survive long enough. After Fuller figures temporality in racial terms in *Summer*, she gives gendered

dimension to it in *Woman*. If *Summer* asks the question as to which “race” is capable of conquering the future, in *Woman* temporality serves as the vehicle for a question as to which “gender” can represent an imperial project on the world’s stage. Her answer, of course, is the American Woman who would bring an end to history by “[r]eturning from the future to the present” (*Woman* 92).

The final chapter examines how W.W. Brown revisits the tenets of Republican Motherhood from the perspective of slave mothers in his criticism of American imperialism. Occupying the central position in Brown’s national genealogy, slave mothers in the novel disrupt and decenter the centrality of the official history of a founding father: Thomas Jefferson. Brown both invokes and disrupts the language of true womanhood through his depiction of Jefferson’s illegitimate daughter. While he criticizes the notion of America as a woman’s empire by showing how the nation tramples on the true womanhood of his quadroon heroine Clotel, he still reproduces the discourse of white women’s moral power and its attendant imperial claims to enlist their support. Rather than simply connecting women’s moral duty to the imperial progress of the nation, however, *Clotel* puts it in the transatlantic context of the emancipationist politics of the British Empire.

CHAPTER II

WHITE FEMININITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BORDERLANDS IN *WIELAND*

This land was Mexican once,
was Indian always
and is.

And will be again.

-- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* (1987).

From a review of the three different species of settlers, it appears that there are certain regular stages which mark the progress from the savage to civilized life. The first settler is nearly related to an Indian in his manners. In the second, the Indian manners are more diluted. It is in the third species only that it is proper to apply the term of farmers.

--Benjamin Rush (1786).

What “increases our own interest in Brown,” wrote Margaret Fuller of Charles Brockden Brown in her review of the republication of *Wieland* and *Ormond* for the *New York Tribune* in 1846, is “that, a prophet . . . of a better era, he has usually placed this thinking royal mind in the body of a woman” (“Review of Charles Brockden Brown” 473)². Through the two female characters—Clara Wieland in *Wieland* and Constantia in *Ormond*—who “have noble thinking minds, full of resource, constancy, courage,” Brown showed that “the term *feminine* is not a synonym for weak.” Brown’s heroine

² Unless otherwise noted, the page numbers of Fuller’s *Tribune* writings all refer to *Margaret Fuller, Critic Writings from the New-York Tribune, 1844-1846*, edited by Judith Mattson Bean and Joel Myerson.

“need not be quite so weak as Eve, the slave of feeling or of flattery: she also has learned to guide her helm amid the storm across the troubled waters” (473). Surely, Clara Wieland, the primary survivor of the massacre of her entire family, does have “constancy and courage” to go on with her life and even to write about the unbearably painful and indescribably horrible event. In passing through “the troubled waters” of familial violence and traumatic memories, she displays not just the female courage but also a female agency that is radical compared to a “weak” woman like Eve.

Quite different from today’s reception of Clara as an extremely unreliable and unstable character, Fuller’s characterization of the heroine as “showing the self-sustaining force of which a lonely mind is capable” (473) reveals more than the changed gender norms and social conditions in which the heroine could be considered as such. It is not just that Clara could be seen as courageous and strong *for a woman*. She is obviously much stronger than Eve, but her “thinking royal mind” surpasses even the male characters as the novel reveals the male psyche is vulnerable to “intellectual . . . drunkenness [that] impels to crime” through Wieland’s madness (474). In Fuller’s words, Clara’s “mind” is great enough to make her “a prophet . . . of a better era,” but her brother Theodore’s misguided belief throws him into a similar position with that of the soldiers who blindly believe in manifest destiny.

Taking place in the years between the conclusion of the French and Indian War and the beginning of the American Revolution, the bloodshed in *Wieland* is staged not on the battlefield but in a domestic scene. Clara narrates the family’s story beginning

with how her father, born in Germany, moved to England where he experiences religious conversion and then came to Pennsylvania to spread Christianity among the Indians. Father Wieland accrues wealth in the new world, but fails to proselytize the Indians. Disappointed in his failure at mission work, he retreats to his temple for private worship and dies in a fire of mysterious origin. Soon after, the mother dies too. Orphaned yet rich, both Clara and Theodore grow in an intellectually open environment. As Theodore marries Catherine Pleyel, and her brother Henry visits to enjoy conversations about religion and philosophy with Theodore, Clara's family becomes a little community of intellectual exchanges of Theodore's religious conviction and rationalism represented by Pleyel (as Henry is called). The peaceful fraternity is soon disturbed, however, by mysterious and ominous disembodied voices heard by Theodore and Clara. It turns out that a stranger named Carwin who comes to join their intellectual circle was guilty of those voices. Being able to throw the voices of others from without, Carwin deceives Pleyel by making him believe that he is overhearing an obscene conversation between Clara and Carwin. While Clara's reputation is ruined, her brother becomes deluded as he becomes convinced that he has heard a divine voice commanding him to sacrifice his whole family. To prove his unquestioning acceptance of the divine will, Wieland kills his wife and children, but Clara is saved by neighbors. It remains unclear whether the voice compelling the sacrifice comes from Carwin or reflects the troubled state of Wieland's religious fanaticism. In a telling comparison of Theodore Wieland's illusion that he is fulfilling his duty to God by slaying his family to the patriotic conviction of the soldiers who come to the Mexican war, Fuller draws an

analogy between the familial violence in the novel to the imperial violence of 1846. Wieland is not the only one who is susceptible to “a strange agent [that] waken[s] the seeds of fanaticism in the breast”: “The victims of such agency are like the soldier of the Rio Grande, who, both legs shot off and his life-blood rushing out with every pulse, replied serenely to his pitying comrades that ‘he had now that for which the soldier enlisted’” (474). Fuller obviously links violence to masculinity, but rather than echoing the notion of the national violence as the desirable way of asserting masculinity, she reverses the idea; men do not assert their agency by participating in the war but lose it as they become the “victims” of the war. Frontier violence does not lead to male agency but denial of it, Fuller seems to suggest, and this is one lesson that Americans should learn from *Wieland*.

She clearly sees the resemblance between Wieland’s conviction that he was “commissioned for this act [of killing] by heaven; who regarded this career of horror as the last refinement of virtue” (*Wieland* 216) and the communal illusion of manifest destiny of her time. To Fuller, her nation—that has become corrupted by the materialistic and imperialistic greed—is in desperate need of a genius like Brown and his insights:

Brown, man of the brooding eye, the teeming brain, the deep and fervent heart; if thy country prize thee not and has almost lost thee out of sight, it is that her heart is made shallow and cold, her eye dim, by the pomp of circumstance, the love of gross outward gain. She cannot long continue

thus for it takes a great deal of soul to keep a huge body from disease and dissolution. As there is more soul thou wilt be more sought, and many will yet sit down with thy Constantia to the meal and water on which she sustained her full and thoughtful existence who could not endure the ennui of aldermanic dinners, or find any relish in the imitation of French cookery. (474)

Fuller places Brown on the opposite side of the misguiding desire for expansion. The “love of gross outward gain” made America’s “heart” “shallow and cold” and “her eye dim,” bringing the “huge body” of the nation under the threat of “disease and dissolution.” Brown’s vision (“the brooding eye”), thoughts and ideas (“the teeming brain”), and sensibility (“the deep and fervent heart”) are all needed as they will provide the nation with “a great deal of soul.” Brown “ought to be the pride of country” (472) because he created a model American woman through the character of Constantia whose story should be brought into households as an educational tool so that America is populated by the homes of “thoughtful existence” like hers. Fuller reiterates her point that the literary worth of Brown lies in his female characters, but she curiously drops Clara Wieland as the pattern to be reproduced at American tables. According to her, both Clara and Constantia “have loving hearts, graceful and plastic natures” (473). Why does she mention only Constantia then? Why doesn’t Clara make an exemplary mistress presiding over the metaphoric “meal and water” of the national table?

Fuller does not explain why, but the readers of *Wieland* all know why. Clara is the narrator who painfully confesses that “my hands might be embrued in blood” (*Wieland* 205) like her brother—how can one recommend American citizens to “sit down with” such a character for the meal? And more importantly, how can she be the prophet of a “better era” to begin with? Clara starts out as a virtuous republican but ends up being a victim of colonial/familial violence. What type of better era is augured in *that* fate? Fuller’s review is too brief to answer all these questions, but her comparison of Clara to her brother is telling enough; only as a contrast to the male model of colonial violence, can the heroine be seen as embodying a more desirable and greater future for the nation.

I begin this chapter with Fuller’s review of *Wieland* because she touches on themes to be examined in my study, namely gender and its relation to American imperialism. Most telling for my purpose is her comparison of Theodore Wieland to the soldiers mobilized for the expansionist war in 1846 and the parallel that she draws between the fictional violence of 1798 and the frontier violence of the Mexican War. The territorial war of her time informs Fuller’s reading of the novel written in the wake of the Revolutionary war, leading her to pay attention to the gendered fanaticism of violence in Brown’s “American Tale” as he called it in his half-title. Does Brown suggest that Euro-American men ironically become the “victims” of the colonial violence by perpetrating it? In like manner, does the heroine of the novel become a “prophet” of a better future through her apparently passive position vis-à-vis colonial

violence? Is the assumption of the frontier as the masculine proving ground reversed in *Wieland* as it rather becomes the testing ground for the viable American subjectivity that is not male? In a way, Fuller answers these questions in her review, but she leaves one important question unanswered; if Brown does all of the above in the novel, *how* does he do that?

Brown traces out a viable model of a new subjectivity, I'd like to show in the following analysis, by delineating the changing thoughts and emotions of the heroine. The novel is narrated from Clara's point of view and demonstrates how she is "transformed from rational and human into a creature of nameless and fearful attributes" (*Wieland* 204-5). It is through this radical change of the Euro-American self from a "rational" "human" being to "nameless" traits that Brown examines fearful yet intriguing prospects for an unknown type of a female subjectivity. Clara's transformation from the ideal republican woman—"a model worthy of assiduous study, and indefatigable imitation" (140)—to the unnamed "attributes" explodes the illusion of difference between the rational white identity and irrational and "fearful" savage characteristics. The belief in white rationality and civilization, that is, the central idea on which the ideology of Republican Motherhood is built, is called into question. At the same time, its ideological task of establishing national identity free from savageness through white women's purifying presence proves unachievable as the rigid distinctions between the Euro-American and American savages are shown to be impossible to maintain. Brown engages in the cultural project to forge the national identity of the

newly independent nation by exploring what type of “transformation” can happen to whiteness in American conditions.

My analysis of *Wieland* joins those critics who have explored Brown’s involvement with the culture of American imperialism by paying attention to “the colonial disturbances and anxieties so fundamental to his narrative” (Rowe 26)³. If the “awkward” post-Revolutionary “situation of being both a post-colony and an emerging colonial power” (Hsu 137) informs and shapes Brown’s narratives as several critics have suggested, I would propose the feminine mind of the narrator as the site where the anxieties created by the precarious political condition of the newly independent nation—whose expansion depended on the systematic dispossession and decimation of Indian tribes—most dramatically reveal themselves in the novel. If *Wieland* is “a story

³ David Kazanjian sees that “the politics of white settler colonialism at the turn of the nineteenth century” is so central to Brown’s narrative project as his texts “replace the violent history of white settler colonialism with an aesthetic call to incorporate scenes of ‘wild’ America” (460). Kazanjian sees the parallel between the policy of “the U.S. government . . . to assimilate Iroquois communities, including Mohawks, by forcibly converting them into discrete yeoman families on privately owned plots of land” and Brown’s efforts to aesthetically assimilate Indianness into the national literature (460-1). Also included in the national policy of President George Washington was genocide. As Laura Doyle points out, “during the years Brown was writing the novel,” Washington “explicitly ordered General John Sullivan to complete ‘the total destruction and devastation of [Iroquois] settlements’” (233). Doyle also draws special attention to the condition of the white settler colonialism of the 1790s as the political realities of the time pertinent to *Wieland*. Written when “[s]ettler warfare against Indians was . . . exacerbated . . . recently, by the mass westward movement of settlers, including veterans of the Revolutionary War who had been paid in grants of land that were sometimes still claimed by tribes” (Doyle 233), *Wieland* addresses the issue of the Anglo-Saxon’s possession of American lands. Relatedly, Hsuan L. Hsu examines the “spatial themes” in *Wieland* and its prequel to show how “the fictional texts both develop and displace” “the spatial regime of expansionism” (137).

about race and murder under colonial conditions” (Doyle 232), it is also a story about how such “colonial conditions” *transform* the psychological condition of a free, white, and republican female self.

“To live in the Borderlands means you”: Borderland Consciousness and the Question of Self

Wieland’s subtitle, *The Transformation, An American Tale*, seems to suggest that Theodore Wieland’s transformation from the “man of gentle virtues and invincible benignity” to “paricide [sic] and savage” (*Wieland* 198, 263) is “an American tale”; America transforms identities. Writing when the birth of a new nation was seen as promising the birth of a new human race, Brown tackles the question as to what type of human subject the nascent republic would give rise to. America, according to Benjamin Rush, is the place where Europeans become “foreign” to themselves: “The manner of settling a new country exhibits a view of the human mind so foreign to the views of it which have been taken for many centuries in Europe” (“To Thomas Percival” 400). To paint the unique “human mind” arising from the American soil is the task Brown takes upon himself. As he explains in the preface to *Edgar Huntly* (1799), his third novel, he sees himself as a “moral painter” exploring “new springs of action and new motives to curiosity . . . opened to us by our own country [that] differ essentially from those which

exist in Europe” (*Edgar Huntly* 3). The “purpose” of Brown’s very first “American Tale” is also to offer “the illustration of some important branches of the moral constitution of man” (*Wieland* 3).

The very genre of American Gothic that Brown himself helps found is fit for the purpose of exploring the psychological terrain of an American subject. The early American Gothic, to borrow the words of Cathy Davidson, “enlarged the arena in which the heroine could realize her nature” by expanding the circle of her action “from the narrow confines of the drawing room . . . to regions of the mind quite unplumbed in the usual sentimental test” (320). The heroine of *Wieland* gets to explore the unexplored areas of the mind as she recounts not just the tragic event but also the inner workings of her mind. Paralleling *Wieland*’s transformation from an exemplary father to a “savage” murderer is the psychological change of the heroine. Both undergo a transformation, but Clara ultimately differs from her brother in how she *reacts* to her change. While *Wieland* cannot either embrace the fragmented self or acknowledge his own savageness, Clara’s getting aware of “nameless and fearful attributes” in her does not lead to self-destruction. As the singular “human” becomes the plural “attributes,” the republican woman becomes one example of a hybrid identity, and as the singular identity becomes the place for multiple voices, Clara even reaches the consciousness that resembles what Anzaldúa has called a borderland state of mind—the consciousness of plurality within one’s self. It is from this consciousness of the contradictions *within* the self that Brown asks his readers to think about the contradictions of the nation’s imperial project.

Anzaldúa makes it clear that her book has its roots in her experience of the multiple and intersected conditions of Chicana subjectivity, but she also encourages critical borrowings of her concept outside the context of the U.S/Mexico border as borderlands are not necessarily confined to the geopolitical space of the Southwest:

The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (np)

If any place occupied by more than two cultures, races, and classes can be seen as a borderland, it wouldn't be going too far to suggest that the entire nation—including the America of Brown's time—can be regarded as borderland. Despite the different social and political realities experienced by the two authors, Anzaldúa's insights can be helpfully used in explicating the inner struggle of the heroine that causes her "transformation." Both Brown and Anzaldúa explore the type of subjectivity imaginable in the heterogeneous and hybrid geopolitical condition of America.

Most importantly, both Brown and Anzaldúa see the racial reality of America as offering the ground on which a selfhood different from the rational and coherent subject of the Enlightenment can come into existence. In their study of an American self, both offer a model of a non-oppressive and non-imperializing subject. Anzaldúa's borderland

subject is confronted with too many identities, coming from too many sources: “struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, *mojado*, *mexicano*, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian—our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people” (109). Not only is the borderland the place where different races coexist, it is also the site where the different races come to coexist *inside* the self. Indigenous to American soil, the borderland subject’s “psyches” are the product of the nation’s “racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization” (99). Like the land populated by different people, “a consciousness of the Borderlands” harbors the others foreign to oneself.

The multi-racial struggle of the borderlands does not stop at the borders of the self, but creates the self whose consciousness is occupied by the plural co-existence of different voices. The borderlands become the place for the new self who breaks down the borders *within* the self and whose consciousness does not operate in the “Western mode” of rational thinking that sets up “borders and walls . . . to keep the undesirable ideas out” (101). Anzaldúa’s *mestiza* overcomes the rigid pattern of rational reasoning and achieves a transformative and synthesizing consciousness that “includes rather than excludes” (101). Her mind does not operate in a dualistic mode, and, as such, *la mestiza* serves as a model of non-dualistic self-identity: the “work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality” (102).

Anzaldúa celebrates the insecurity and indecisiveness of a state of belonging to at least two identities at the same time. The “mental and emotional states of perplexity”

and the “psychic restlessness” (100) that plague a *mestiza* can become the condition for creating a new selfhood once she decides to acknowledge the different others inside her own self and being tolerant for the inner contradiction. Anzaldúa sees America as the place where a new self with new epistemic insights can emerge. Uncanny parallels can be drawn between her and Brown whose first novel traces a type of subjectivity that can emerge from the traumatic American experience. If Anzaldúa turns the ambivalence and confusions facing Chicanas into generative epistemic processes through which a non-dualistic mode of selfhood can be acquired, Brown’s “American Tale” microscopes the emotional tumult of the enlightened mind to offer alternatives to the Enlightenment definitions of selfhood. In quite a similar way to how the borderlands become the space for radical subjectivities, Brown’s America becomes the place where whiteness is tested and a new form of white identity emerges⁴.

⁴ By applying the concept of borderlands into the psychological dynamics of the novel, I am expanding on and revising those critics who locate subversive potential in Brown’s gothic novels, most notably Cathy N. Davidson and Julia A. Stern. Davidson’s ground breaking study of how the eighteenth century novels give voice to the repressed others who did not count as citizens of the new nation is expanded by Stern who also sees that the early American “gothic story, mournfully retold in the sensational fiction of the period, exposes the decidedly less rational face of post-Revolutionary ‘Enlightenment’” (Stern 2). Stern sees Brown’s America as a metaphorical “crypt, that the nation’s noncitizens—women, the poor, Native Americans, African Americans, and aliens—lie socially dead and inadequately buried, the casualties of post-Revolutionary political foreclosure” (2). A powerful metaphor for the nation built on the violence perpetrated against the others indeed, Stern’s “crypt,” however, offers little room for imagining how the voices of the “socially dead” could erupt through their burial ground. Despite her intention to restore the voices of the new republic’s “legally unacknowledged others” (9), Stern’s literary analyses have little to offer about the racial

The Drama of Selfhood in the New World

Brown first situates the heroine in the history of imperial self through her family genealogy. The missionary project started by the father Wieland coincides with the project of American imperialism as he comes to the nation to convert the “savage tribes” (11):

He had imbibed an opinion that it was his duty to disseminate the truths of the gospel among the unbelieving nations. He was terrified at first by the perils and hardships to which the life of a missionary is exposed. This cowardice made him diligent in the invention of objections and excuses; but he found it impossible wholly to shake off the belief that such was the injunction of his duty. The belief, after every new conflict with his passions, acquired new strength; and, at length, he formed a resolution of complying with what he deemed the will of heaven. (10)

others. America might be the nation “erected on or engendered out of a figurative grave” (Stern 9), but it also has been the nation that continually expands its borders and therefore creates more borderlands. As dividing lines that “are set up to define” not only “the places that are safe and unsafe” but also “to distinguish *us* from *them*,” borders also create borderlands that are at once political and psychological, a place where the “prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (Anzaldúa 25). Built on the violent expansion of national borders, but not necessarily the static burial ground—like Stern’s “crypt” where unwanted Americans are violently buried—borderlands could be a useful metaphor for imagining the relation between the American subject formation vis-à-vis the expelled others and its imperialism.

Indirectly and evasively, the above sentences link the father Wieland's decision to live the "life of a missionary" to the broader thrust of the religious expansionism of the time that it is the "will of heaven" to submit the "unbelieving nations" to the "truths of the gospel." His decision is only the outcome of "imbib[ing]" the already existing "opinion," and the sense of specialness that he is carrying out the "will of heaven" was also the shared feelings among the early colonizers too. A European transplanted in the Indian world, his religious aspiration also resembles that of the Pilgrims who "portrayed themselves as an ascetic, self-denying army, mortifying their flesh in the wilderness to bring God to the heathen and light to their trans-Atlantic brethren" (Slotkin 60-61).

As his mission recapitulates the logic of imperialism, the founder of Mettingen involves himself in the emerging empire, but before he sets himself the task, his own self becomes empire-like first:

His morals, which had never been loose, were now modelled by a stricter standard. The empire of religious duty extended itself to his looks, gestures, and phrases. All levities of speech, and negligences of behaviour, were proscribed. His air was mournful and contemplative. He laboured to keep alive a sentiment of fear, and a belief of the awe-creating presence of the Deity. Ideas foreign to this were sedulously excluded. To suffer their intrusion was a crime against the Divine Majesty inexpressible but by days and weeks of the keenest agonies. (9-10)

Impregnable and vigilant, the province of the father's selfhood is maintained like the imperial borders that constantly check the "foreign" "intrusion." The logic of empire constitutes the self, establishing mutuality between the self and empire, and creating the same problem for both; how can one's self and nation expand without letting "ideas foreign" and the foreigners dwell within the newly expanded boundaries?⁵ Can his religious empire remain bounded and unchanged after absorbing others into the selfsame set of beliefs? Can imperial desire be fulfilled without absorbing aliens whose foreignness might alienate one's identity? Wieland's desire mirrors the desire of imperialism, and the tale of Wieland can be read as a narrative of an imperial self and its fate on American soil.

Wieland seems to realize the contradiction inherent in his missionary goal only after he faces the concrete reality of the otherness of the native inhabitants of Pennsylvania when the actual presence of them almost immediately awakens the fears

⁵ In conflating the politics of an imperial nation and an imperial self, the novel also delineates what Amy Kaplan has called "an unstable paradox at the heart of U.S. imperial culture" (3). Kaplan shows how the contradictory desire to expand the Americanness into boundless empire *and* to keep the boundary of the nation intact from the threatening invasions of foreignness has been central to the nation's imperial project: "If the fantasy of American imperialism aspires to a borderless world where it finds its own reflection everywhere, then the fruition of this dream shatters the coherence of national identity, as the boundaries that distinguish it from the outside world promise to collapse" (16). The dilemma facing father Wieland is of the same nature with the "paradox" of American imperial desire; a tension between the "fantasy" of expanding an empire of religion and the fear of acculturation ceaselessly inspires the founder of Mettingen to "keep alive a sentiment of fear."

suppressed by religious zeal: “North-American Indians naturally presented themselves as the first objects for this species of benevolence. As soon as his servitude expired, he converted his little fortune into money, and embarked for Philadelphia. Here his fears were revived, and a nearer survey of savage manners once more shook his resolution” (11). The utter otherness of “savage manners” doesn’t seem to lend itself to the conversion but rather to provoke anxiety from which the young immigrant chooses to escape. He cannot simultaneously extend his “empire of religious duty” to the natives *and* keep himself from the “savage” influence.

Indians might not be subordinated to the religious and civilizing authority of a European man, but their land is. Wieland fails in incorporating the savages into his own belief, but instead he seizes their land and emerges as a colonial gentry: “The cheapness of land, and the service of African slaves, which were then in general use, gave him who was poor in Europe all the advantages of wealth”(11). The self-appointed missionary becomes a colonizer, and it is this “wealth” acquired through colonial entitlement that prepares for the emergence of a new form of identity typified through Clara, the heroine: a propertied and free Anglo-Saxon woman. Educated, independent, rational, and self-reliant, Clara seems to embody all the great and exhilarating possibilities for women opened up by the political experiment of the new republic by becoming “a specimen of human powers that [is] wholly new” (234). While the abstract ideals espoused by the ideology of republican womanhood seem to define Clara’s identity, however, she will have to realize that her subjectivity is materially conditioned. Clara’s passing remark on

the land-seizure and slavery—the very bedrock for colonial privilege—suggests the unimportance of them; only as a fleeting irrelevance can the racial “advantages” against the natives and the Africans appear. Almost deleted and expelled from the story, however, these elements are crucial and indispensable for her own subjectivity. For what would Clara be without the inheritance of landed wealth, leisure, and a classic education—the privileges that would have been impossible without the subjugation of the land and the native people? Underlying the condition of Clara’s existence is the inheritance of the colonial wealth as well as her gender and race. While Clara’s identity is built under different material conditions from her father, the presence of the others continues to create similar problems to her. These others might be invisible in the narrative, but the anxiety caused by their hidden presence plays out as Clara begins to question her own belief in human rationality.

It is not just the wealth that Clara inherits from her father; she accepts an almost identical view of selfhood with him. Like her father who believes that he can ensure his spiritual security through “ceaseless watchfulness and prayer”(10), Clara used to believe that she can ward off “certain evils” through “possession of a sound mind” and that “a sentiment like despair” cannot “invade” her (104). The difference between Clara and her father is that the daughter believes more in the faculty of reason than the practice of religion, and her gender compels her to guard her mind even more strictly against false principles regarding the subject of “love and marriage”—a point made by Pleyel when he accuses Clara for letting her “honor [become] . . . forfeited” (144): “As a woman,

young, beautiful, and independent, it behoved you to have fortified your mind with just principles on this subject” (141). Clara herself believes that her mind is fortified enough to render her selfhood impregnable, but the “decree that ascertained the condition of [her] life” (5) makes her realize that she has less control over her feelings than she used to think.

Confronting the Other

The very first of a series of Clara’s transformations happens with the appearance of Carwin whose presence in the text feels more like a device than a character. Brown refuses to give any definitive explanation as to the motive and culpability of the villain, rendering him an unknowable other. Carwin obviously represents otherness and has been treated as such by most critics. What has been less noted, however, is that the novel complicates the meaning of Carwin’s otherness by rendering him *not so* other to the heroine. An irresistible identification with Carwin creates an intense psychological tension for Clara, the survivor of the “horrors such as no heart has hitherto conceived” (56). Gothic excesses fill the world of *Wieland* where the father Wieland’s body is mysteriously and spontaneously combusted and his son, guided by mysterious voices ordering him Abraham-like to murder his family for the divine sacrifice, kills his wife, children, and ward. The narrator herself narrowly escapes her brother’s attempts to kill her, but when she looks back to make sense of the massacre, she remembers how the “effects . . . flowed from” Carwin’s portrait, which is painted by herself became one of “the most extraordinary incidents of [her] life” (61), asking the reader to acknowledge

the central importance of Carwin's otherness in her story and rendering the "effects" of otherness as one important theme of it.

The construction of others was one important cultural work that the early American romance, including Brown's, performed according to Robert Levine. Faced with "a powerful need to confirm and reconfirm the national identity . . . the citizenry of the new nation needed to conceive of itself in opposition to threatening and villainous communities." Americans could see themselves as Americans by claiming that they "were not a Roman Catholic, 'savage,' satanic, aristocratic, or despotic people" (Levine 9-10). Combining all the above attributes, Carwin appears to "stan[d] in for the foreign infiltrators early Americans feared" (Bradshaw 365). But rather than approving and satisfying the cultural impulse to confirm the national identity by measuring what the new nation's citizens are *not*,⁶ Brown frustrates such desire through Clara's relation to Carwin.

Carwin first appears as a poor man looking like a "clown" and has "nothing remarkable" as his appearances "were frequently to be met with on the road, and in the harvest field" (57). Clara's description that Carwin "had none of that gracefulness and ease which distinguish a person with certain advantages of education from a clown"(57) tells more of Clara's own class bias than the stranger's "education." To Clara, there is "nothing remarkable" about Carwin because there is no sign of upper class privilege in

⁶ For more detailed explanation on how the Post-Revolutionary Americans build the national sense of identity by creating numerous others, see Smith-Rosenberg's *This Violent Empire*.

his appearance. Apparently uneducated and unpropertied, Carwin seems to be the complete opposite of Clara. As the story unfolds, however, Carwin reveals himself to be less the reverse of the heroine than is apparent.

It takes only one and a half pages for Clara to feel spontaneous and unexpected “sympathy” towards him. When Clara first overhears Carwin’s voice without knowing that it is the voice of the clownish looking stranger that she just saw, she is deeply moved by the words:

I listened to this dialogue in silence. The words uttered by the person without, affected me as somewhat singular, but what chiefly rendered them remarkable, was the tone that accompanied them. It was wholly new. My brother’s voice and Pleyel’s were musical and energetic. I had fondly imagined, that, in this respect, they were surpassed by none. Now my mistake was detected. I cannot pretend to communicate the impression that was made upon me by these accents, or to depict the degree in which force and sweetness were blended in them. They were articulated with a distinctness that was unexampled in my experience. But this was not all. The voice was not only mellifluous and clear, but the emphasis was so just, and the modulation so impassioned, that it seemed as if an heart of stone could not fail of being moved by it. It imparted to me an emotion altogether involuntary and incontrollable. When he uttered the words “for charity’s sweet sake,” I dropped the cloth that I held in my hand, my heart

overflowed with sympathy, and my eyes with unbidden tears.(59)

The tone of Carwin's voice is so "singular" that Clara cannot "pretend to communicate the impression" she got from its "force and sweetness." Clara feels that the effects of Carwin's voice on her are incommunicable to other people. While the narrator suggests that the resonance of his voice creates a unique experience that is almost unsharable and only belongs to the narrator, she clearly senses a peculiar kind of emotional bonding with the speaker by way of "sympathy" that is "altogether involuntary and incontrollable." Her reaction is so "singular" and strange that even her efforts to diminish the inarticulable forces of the speech by a detailed analysis of the "tone," "accents," "emphasis," and "modulation" fail. The rational approach to the "impassioned" speech ironically emphasizes the absurdity of the narrator's excessively emotional reaction to the stranger's words. Retrospectively, this absurd and even irrational experience of unwanted intimacy with the stranger is remembered as the first sign of change that portends even more dramatic alteration of the heroine from the rational colonizer to the victim of irrational colonial violence.

By relating the detailed recollections of her first encounter with Carwin, Clara makes it clear that her transformation began even before she is victimized by her brother's violence and deserted by Pleyel. Under the emotional sway of the stranger, the heroine is first to experience different aspects of her feelings, such as sympathy. Note that the heroine uses this ideologically charged word of the eighteenth century in order to describe her odd feelings of becoming beside oneself. It is an apt word because

sympathy requires a special mental state where one has an emotional experience that is not one's own. It is also important to note here that to Clara sympathy is the word of familial import⁷. While the community of Mettingen has its genealogical root in the lineage of Wieland, it is emotionally maintained through the mutual sympathy between the old and new members of the family. Pleyel is loved not just because of his biological link to Catherine but because of his contribution to the felicity of the little society through his "sympathy of tastes" (27). Louisa virtually becomes a foster daughter "loved . . . with an affection more than parental" (29) through the qualities that merit the sympathy of Clara: "She never met my eye, or occurred to my reflections, without exciting a kind of enthusiasm. Her softness, her intelligence, her equanimity, never shall I see surpassed. I have often shed tears of pleasure at her approach, and pressed her to my bosom in an agony of fondness" (30). Observe that the words Clara uses to describe the character of Louisa—"softness," "intelligence," and "equanimity"—are Clara's own merits too; sympathy depends on a fantasy of likeness. The tears that fill Clara's eyes upon hearing Carwin's voice resemble the "tears of pleasure" that Louisa induces; they both express the overwhelming feeling of sympathy. While Louisa's likeness with Clara

⁷ When describes the meaning of "Temple," for example, Clara points out that it was the place for the family *and* the sympathetic communication:

Every joyous and tender scene most dear to my memory, is connected with this edifice. Here the performances of our musical and poetical ancestor were rehearsed. Here my brother's children received the rudiments of their education; here a thousand conversations, pregnant with delight and improvement, took place; and here the social affections were accustomed to expand, and the tear of delicious *sympathy* to be shed (my emphasis 26).

places the girl in the safe range of sympathetic identification, however, Carwin doesn't. Louisa excites a narcissistic "enthusiasm" from Clara with a mirror image. But the unwanted sympathy towards Carwin creates uneasiness and reveals that in Clara's world a feeling like sympathy is inflected by race and class. Carwin's voice might lead the heroine to feel sympathy towards the unseen wanderer, but the sight of him suggests that he does not belong to those worthy of her compassion⁸.

Carwin's entrance into Clara's life sparks a feeling that is at once intimate and alienating. As Carwin turns out to be the complete opposite of the "form, and attitude, and garb" that Clara imagines "worthy to accompany such elocution," she is so "surpriz[e]" that she can hardly "reconcile" herself to the "disappointment" :

Judge my surprize, when I beheld the self-same figure that had appeared an

⁸ Although Stern does not examine the workings of sympathy in *Wieland* in her study of emotion in the late eighteenth century American novels (*The Plight of Feeling*), her explanation about the two competing formulations of the sympathy of the time might be used in approaching the clash between the spontaneous sympathy sparked by Carwin's voice and the immediate shock followed by the sight of the speaker. According to Stern, Brown was writing when the emerging concept of proto-liberal "fellow feeling based on imaginative recognition of and emotional response to the suffering of another" (234) was competing against the dominant form of a "republican sympathy" embodied in a community that, while supposedly based on "disinterest," operates to expel difference in order to maintain cohesion. Prompted by the disinterested condition of hearing a voice, the initial sympathy Clara feels towards the unseen stranger seems to affirm the dominant concept of "republican sympathy," but the following disappointment, to borrow Stern's words, shows that republican sympathy can never be "disinterested" as it is "[a]lways already implicated in structures of race, class, gender, and economic privilege" (234).

half hour before upon the bank. My fancy had conjured up a very different image. A form, and attitude, and garb, were instantly created worthy to accompany such elocution; but this person was, in all visible respects, the reverse of this phantom. Strange as it may seem, I could not speedily reconcile myself to this disappointment. Instead of returning to my employment, I threw myself in a chair that was placed opposite the door, and sunk into a fit of musing. (60)

It should be astonishing to Clara that “the self-same figure that had appeared an half hour before,” who led her to “reflec[t] on the alliance . . . between ignorance and the practice of agriculture” is capable of such eloquence. What is so shocking about Carwin then is that he unsettles the assumptions that underlie and inform Clara’s world where “the acquisition of wisdom and eloquence” is determined by one’s economic condition (58). Moreover, through the incongruity between his class and education, Carwin exposes how sympathy—the emotional interaction that is supposed to transcend the distance and difference between people—actually operates. Carwin’s figure comes as a shock only because of his voice’s ability to induce sympathy that seems to exist exclusively between the propertied who are “worthy” of the refinement. When sympathy really transcends the difference of class, it creates a “disappointment” that is not easily appeased. When the emotional connection happens outside the boundaries of the sympathetic community that is racially defined and economically privileged, it unsettles the apparently unified and unitary self. The true sympathy towards the lower

class other is disturbing because it ruptures the homogeneity of the person acquired through the exclusion of the propertyless from one's affectionate group. Etymology tells us that the feeling of being "together" (the Greek *syn*), that is, being in union and proximity is the essential feature of sympathy. The feeling reserved for only those in proximity both in literal and figurative senses of the term—this is exactly what Clara feels when she feels "sympathy," that is, until she is confronted with Carwin's otherness. What happens when one feels genuine sympathy towards the culturally defined other? The other, by definition, is the one placed remote from all feeling of human obligation of the subject. But if the subject starts to feel sympathy to those outside the boundaries of his or her emotional concerns, can there still exist the emotional distance between the subject and object? Carwin's first appearance poses the question regarding the nature and boundaries of sympathy.

It does seem "strange" that Clara's disappointment at Carwin's appearance should be that big, but what is even stranger is that Clara decides to draw a portrait of his "memorable visage" (61) as soon as he leaves; almost in an instant the object of disappointment becomes the object of artistic representation and reproduction. The "vivid and indelible" impression made by the "stranger's countenance" (60) or "the effects which immediately flowed from it," Clara confesses, "I count among the most extraordinary incidents of my life" (61). Less than an hour ago, Carwin was a mere stranger who came across as "nothing remarkable" (57). His "tones" that "dissolve" Clara in "tears" (60), however, act on her in a way that she begins to see remarkable

effects of his countenance. The progress of Clara's mind suggests that the sympathetic dissolution has to be experienced first in order to fully appreciate the catalytic force emanating from the presence of the other, the force that once felt keenly could be an extra-ordinary incident. That the peculiar effects of Carwin's face are Clara's subjective evaluation is affirmed when she shows the portrait to Pleyel: "In the midst of thoughts excited by these events, I was not unmindful of my interview with the stranger. I related the particulars, and showed the portrait to my friends. Pleyel recollected to have met with a figure resembling my description in the city; but neither his face or garb made the same impression upon him that it made upon me" (70). Her reaction is extra-ordinary in the truest sense of the word because, undistinguishable from ordinary farmers, Carwin's appearance would not ordinarily disrupt her sense of stability.⁹

To the implied reader who has already heard about the massacre, to the unnamed friend who has made a "request" to "be informed of the events that have lately happened" (5), Clara is saying that one of "the most extraordinary incidents of [her] life" is the "effects" of the face of a mere stranger. The effects of Carwin's entrance into

⁹ Elizabeth Dill has accurately located Clara's observation on the "effects" of Carwin as the first link to the chain of her transformations, but she downplays Carwin's role in sparking the change by emphasizing that "it is her *reaction to* Carwin, not Carwin himself" nor "his extraordinary face, but 'the effects which immediately flowed from it'" (280). But how can "the effects . . . flowed from" the face could be separable from the very person? While I agree with Dill that Clara's first encounter with Carwin is an important textual moment, I do not think that Carwin can be so easily dismissed. Most importantly, it is the very assumption about the subject's disconnection and detachment from the other that the novel dismantles.

Clara's life are affirmed by Pleyel too. As he recalls later, Carwin's introduction into the circle "powerfully affected" Clara:

You were powerfully affected by his first appearance; you were bewitched by his countenance and his tones; your description was ardent and pathetic: I listened to you with some emotions of surprise. The portrait you drew in his absence, and the intensity with which you mused upon it, were new and unexpected incidents. They bespoke a sensibility somewhat too vivid; but from which, while subjected to the guidance of an understanding like yours, there was nothing to dread. (140-41)

Carwin awakens "a sensibility somewhat too vivid" to be suppressed, except by "the guidance of an understanding like" Clara's. Pleyel characterizes the "new and unexpected" emotional response from Clara as something to "dread" under normal circumstances; it is "nothing to dread" only as far as it is under "the guidance" of reliable rationality. What is so dreadful about the detected sensibility is that it is "too vivid," that is, too full of life. The literal meaning of "vivid" assumes a special import as it makes a sharp contrast to the preceding words—words that refer to lifeless and abstract ideals. To him, Clara is a "union between intellect and form, which has hitherto existed only in the conceptions of the poet," "an example so rare," "completeness," "a model . . . devoid of imperfection," "a combination of harmonies and graces," an "object" or "a scene" worthy of a "picture," and a "pattern" to be imitated (139-40). Pleyel admires not so much the person of Clara as the abstract ideal she exemplifies: "He that

gifted me with perception of excellence, compelled me to love it” (141). Referred to as “it,” the inanimate “excellence” is the object worthy of Pleyel’s “love,” not the erroneous and desiring human subject motivated by “a sensibility somewhat too vivid”; when “its completeness” is injured, the “unexceptionable pattern” turns into a “hateful scene” (138-40).

Pleyel is accurate in pointing out the concurrence of Clara’s noticeable change and her first acquaintance with Carwin. He also intuitively suggests that Carwin animates and awakens some sensibility that has been repressed hitherto, but he is unable to see that the newly awakened sensuality is *not* purely sexual. Carwin obviously revivifies repressed emotions in Clara, but the repression awakened by him is not so much sexual as *historical*.¹⁰ The narrator’s own words reveal that Carwin opens the locked place in Clara’s consciousness by stirring up the repressed anxiety about the colonial foundation for her community. That is, he awakens the repressed fear that her

¹⁰ But this is not fully recognized by Pleyel *and* the critics of the novel. Carwin is Clara’s “own self-generated sexuality—raw, irrational, irresponsible, violent, even criminal,” in the words of Norman S. Grabo, and the “obverse twin” of Theodore, onto whom Clara projects the forbidden desire towards her own brother (27). It has almost become a critical commonplace to note the incestuous impulse of Clara in unpacking the psychological dynamics of the early American family in the novel. Such approaches to interpret important psychological expressions as sexual expressions, however, risk erasing the historical dimension of the story: the history of genocide and displacement of indigenous populations that made America possible. If we take the author’s request made in the subtitle of the novel to read it as “An American Tale” seriously enough, we should pay attention to what makes Clara’s inner experience as American experience as opposed to purely sexual.

family's "happiness . . . at present enjoyed was set on mutable foundations" (62)—something that even the "sound of war" could not do. As the narrator remembers, the French-Indian war neither interrupts her community's happiness nor threatens their security: "The sound of war had been heard, but it was at such a distance as to enhance our enjoyment by affording objects of comparison" (29). The victims of colonial violence when seen "at such a distance" serve as "objects of comparison," and as such they deserve no sympathy. To Clara, "Indians . . . repulsed" and the victims of "[r]evolutions and battles" are just that: objects. Carwin brings about change in the state of mind of Clara who apparently does not feel threatened even by the ongoing violence. He also begins to change the way Clara views others' pain. During the storm of the day following the first meeting with Carwin, "the uncertainty of life" occurs to her "without any of its usual and alleviating accompaniments":

I said to myself, we must die. Sooner or later, we must disappear for ever from the face of the earth. Whatever be the links that hold us to life, they must be broken. This scene of existence is, in all its parts, calamitous. The greater number is oppressed with immediate evils, and those, the tide of whose fortunes is full, how small is their portion of enjoyment, since they know that it will terminate. (63)

Compare the above sentiment about anguish and death to the previous feeling of remoteness and detachment from the actual violence of the war: "Revolutions and battles, however calamitous to those who occupied the scene, contributed in some sort

to our happiness, by agitating our minds with curiosity, and furnishing causes of patriotic exultation” (29). Previously, the scene of war was “calamitous”; now it is her own “scene of existence” that is “calamitous.” The place for happiness and refined conversation that “enjoyed . . . security and liberty” (43) does not seem to ensure the heroine’s safety any more as she is feeling that her “enjoyment . . . will terminate.” Interestingly, the uncertainty of safety and the anxiety about the “mutable foundations” for her prosperity are expressed through the vocabulary of ethnic extermination; Clara can no longer indulge in the “exultation” offered by remote violence because she is beginning to understand that even she and *we* “must disappear for ever from the face of the earth.” As the British observer John Smyth reported in 1784, “nothing is more common than to hear [white Americans] talk of extirpating [the whole race of Indians] totally from the face of the earth, men, women, and children” (qtd. in Doyle 233). Benjamin Franklin gives more philosophic expression to the idea of erasing the total race of Native Americans from the face of the earth by using the enlightenment paradigm of light: “And while we are, as I may call it, Scouring our Planet by clearing America of Woods, and so making this Side of our Globe reflect a brighter Light to the Eyes of Inhabitants in Mars or Venus, why should we in the Sight of Superior Beings, darken its People?” (“Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind”). For Franklin, “the Saxons [and] the English, make the principal Body of White People on the Face of the Earth” who truly brightens it, and only they deserve to inhabit “this Side of our Globe” (“Observations”). Franklin’s rhetorical gymnastics that turns whiteness into the symbol of light is only one example of how the tropes of Enlightenment served to

justify the colonial violence during his time. According to Robert Ferguson, “the paradigm of light” was repeatedly used to “imply rational controls that do not exist in white expansion and government policy” (169). In *Wieland*, however, light does not destroy the dark races but the Saxon family. The very first traumatic event besetting the Wieland family in America is associated with light; father Wieland comes to America to bring the “light of the world” into the land of darkness but becomes combusted by a strange explosive light. His son wishes for “a ray from above” that would dispel “not only the physical, but moral night” (40), but the “last illumination” (257) that he thinks he gets from his God is actually a delusion that he can discern the divine intention. Clara sees a face that has “the eyes [that] emitted sparks, which, no doubt, if I had been unattended by a light, would have illuminated like the coruscations of a meteor” (168) right before she first discovers the evidence of her brother’s savagery: his wife Catharine’s butchered body. Clara asks the reader to see the “resemblance” between the mysterious “facts” about her father’s mysterious burning and the recent family tragedy as if the light that she sees is linked with the light that struck her father: “Their resemblance to recent events revived them with new force in my memory, and made me more anxious to explain them” (21). Even in the narrator’s nightmare where she is “swallowed up by whirlpools, or caught up in the air by half-seen gigantic forms, and thrown upon pointed rocks, or cast among the billows,” the positive connotation of light is subverted as the site revealed by it is even more despairing: “Sometimes gleams of light were shot into a dark abyss, on the verge of which I was standing, and enabled me to discover, for a moment, its enormous depth and hideous precipices” (269).

What should be the symbol of enlightenment becomes an ominous sign for this little community of colonial gentry as it is both the cause and harbinger of the destruction of the family. It is also the cause for fear that makes Clara feel the coming “destruction”: “The first visitings of this light called up a train of horrors in my mind; destruction impended over this spot” (73). If for Franklin enlightening America meant excluding “all Blacks and Tawneys” from the American side of the earth and making it an entirely Anglo-Saxon society, Brown subverts the patterned understanding by using light to conjure the dismal futurity of the Saxon descendants in the nation through the voice of a female narrator: a narrator who is so irrational that she can no longer believe in the Enlightenment rationale that civilization and progress culminate in the “light” of white skin of Anglo-Saxon race.

Compare Wieland’s certitude that “no spot on the globe enjoyed equal security and liberty to that which he at present inhabited” (43) to Clara’s anxiety. Whereas he feels assured that he lives on the enlightened “spot” free from the corruption, tyranny, and political turmoil of Europe, Clara feels the “destruction impended over this spot” (73). She feels as if waiting for the fate that was seen to be reserved for Indians when she says to herself that “we must disappear for ever from the face of the earth.” She, in other words, begins to assume the voice that white Americans wanted to hear from the dying Indians. Ferguson has explained that “Native-American efforts . . . [to] contend with the near certainty of their own disappearance” remain only in “fragmentary form” because the early republicans *rejected* those voices. The only Indian voice that early

republicans loved to hear was the one that “epitomizes the vanishing Indian” (164). But Brown makes his white heroine predict that “we,” and not the Indians, will all disappear from the face of the earth. Clara subtly twists the “redeemer nation” rationale that Euro-Americans will fulfill the biblical prophecies right from the very beginning of the novel when she asserts that the story of her family “squares with the maxims of eternal equity” and reveals how the divine “power . . . governs the course of human affairs” (5); to her, the divine will manifests itself not by removing the “savages” from the land but by destroying the exemplary family and making its only survivor “leave the country forever” (212). Clara’s American experience teaches her that “[t]he world of man was shrowded in misery and blood, and constituted a loathsome spectacle” (210), but even before she learns it from her own exposure to violence, the way she sees the world begins to change—when Carwin sparks the change from Clara and makes her see that “[t]he greater number is oppressed with immediate evils.” She has not yet become the victim of “immediate evils,” but her encounter with Carwin’s otherness somehow broadens the boundaries for sympathetic identification in a way that includes a “greater number” of people. Her mind is also “thronged by vivid, but confused images” and cannot “drive them away” (63). It is as if she is transported to the psychological borderlands where the consciousness of different voices coexists.

Carwin’s dismantling influence on Clara’s identity has already been observed by Maureen Woodard who explains that Clara’s “confrontation with Carwin, the sexually-charged and racially-identified other, leads not only to an alteration of her identity in

relation to Pleyel and Wieland, but to a disruption of her own sense of a unified self” (141). While Woodard insightfully discerns the novel’s preoccupation with the question of a stable white identity, she fails to observe that Carwin’s effects on Clara are *not* purely sexual. According to her, Clara is “more than symbolically altered” because “Carwin has succeeded in drawing her into his sexually charged world” (139-40) from the world of civic and feminine virtue that she belonged to before, but I would rather say that the world into which Carwin draws Clara is where she can experience the borderlands consciousness. For a disruption of the sense of a unified self leads to the self that harbors multiple voices in the novel. One of the first voices that invade Clara’s consciousness after her confrontation with Carwin’s otherness is that of an Indian. Carwin enacts an uncanny echo of the voices that Clara might prefer had remained hidden: the voices of the displaced people and those who were still hunted by white Americans. Once awakened, the anxiety about colonial disturbances can no longer be safely confined to unconsciousness; it invades Clara’s consciousness, and exposes her to the savage and uncivilized voices inside her psyche.

Borderlands Mind of a White Woman

Carwin has Clara uncover her repressed fear, and his decision “to put [her] courage to the test” (230) intensifies it. As he confesses later, “A woman capable of recollection in danger, of warding off groundless panics, of discerning the true mode of proceeding, and profiting by her best resources, is a prodigy. I was desirous of ascertaining whether you were such an one” (230). Carwin understands that Clara’s

courage and tranquility are rooted in her misguided belief that she is living in “an inviolate asylum” (68). As far as her own place remains “inviolated,” her mind will remain so too. She “was habitually indifferent to all the causes of fear, by which the majority are afflicted” because she thought that, unlike the “majority” of people, her “security had never been molested” and will never be (64). In the world of *Wieland*, the spatial meaning of security coincides with the psychological meaning of the term. Spatial interiority and subjective inwardness become almost synonymous, and Clara’s distinctiveness is imagined in spatial terms too; she could be seen as an *upright* person “accomplished and wise beyond the rest of women” (133) only insofar as she is *not* “pushed from [her] immoveable and lofty station” (80). Identity seems to be spatially conditioned, and both the literal and figurative meaning of being displaced from one’s supposed place is dramatized through the “transformation” of the characters. The transformation of both Wieland from “the glory of his species into worse than brute” (225) and Clara from “rational and human into a creature of nameless and fearful attributes” (205) are metaphorically inseparable from the change of their place: the change of the “blooming scene of our existence” into “dreariness and desert” (6).

Carwin’s test involves threatening the security of Clara’s space, and his first trick is to counterfeit the intrusion of two murderers into her closet by mounting to its window using a ladder provided by Judith, the heroine’s servant girl. Carwin does not have to seduce Clara in order to destroy her reputation as there is an easier substitute that would literally provide the ladder for his trick. The insignificant presence of a

domestic worker would have made her invisible in the narrative, but Carwin's use of her paradoxically emphasizes her significance in maintaining domestic security. Clara turns out to be less in control of her own home as it harbors a working-class other who could become a threat to its security unbeknownst to her. If Carwin's voice disrupts the heroine's consciousness through its peculiar power to animate the voice of the other inside her own self, he could also disrupt the security of her private space because he knows how to use the position of the lower class other dwelling in the very same place.

Judith's presence renders Clara's domestic space heterogeneous, but Carwin makes it even more so through the bilquist ability to "speak where he is not" (249). The space of the ideal family turns out to be less homogeneous than it might seem, and Carwin's ventriloquism would display that it is not purified of colonial context either. Brown "indianizes" Carwin in *Memoirs of Carwin*, the unfinished prequel to *Wieland* by associating Carwin's bilquism with the voice of the savage; when Carwin "repeated in the shrill tones of a Mohock savage" and the tones "reverberated" in the rocky passage of a western district of Pennsylvania (284), he first sees the possibility of becoming a "bilquist." His bilquism then can be seen as returning the repressed Indian voice¹¹. As Hsu explains, Carwin "voices the spatial claims of displaced peoples"

¹¹ From the perspective of the eighteenth century study of language, Carwin's acquisition of Mohawk sounds could also be seen as enacting the return to "the original nature of man." After studying "some barbarous and imperfect languages spoken in America," Lord Monboddoo concludes that "language was not natural to man but was developed in the course of the civilizing process" (Kunitz 32). In his six volume work *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1773-1792), Lord Monboddoo wrote:

by echoing the Mohawks and “enacts an allegorical return of the indigenous peoples expropriated by the settlement and expansion of the colonies” (144, 148)¹². In so doing, he “render[s] the space of Clara’s house heterogeneous and unmappable” (Hsu 139). I would add to Hsu’s insights that it is not just the purity of her material space that Carwin’s voice disrupts, though; the inner space of Clara’s own self becomes heterogeneous too. Brown establishes a metaphorical correspondence between the intrusion into material space and the invasion into the metaphorical space of the female mind, making her interiority analogous to domestic interiority.

The metaphorical meaning and import of closet is so unmistakable that one cannot but see Carwin’s intrusion into it as symbolizing his breaking into Clara’s inner subjectivity. Her innermost places are all open, figuratively and literally, to the villain. He could be in her closet or her summer house, and is the closest witness to her most private moment of fear and panic. As he can “speak where he is not,” the border becomes meaningless, for it no longer functions to distinguish inside from outside, and us from them. Home no longer safely girds and guards an interiority as it is easily

We must consider the state of savages who are so much nearer the natural state of man than we that it is from them only that we can form any idea of the original nature of man. And I will venture to affirm that any man who attempts to form a system of human nature from what he observes among civilized nations only will produce a system not of nature but of art and instead of the natural man, the workmanship of God, will exhibit an artificial creature of human institutions (qtd. in Kunitz 32)

¹² Kazanjian draws a different conclusion from the same moment, characterizing Carwin as a figure whose voice “displaces” the voices of the Indian (486-7).

accessible to the stranger. The logic of expulsion underlying the notion of home within the discourse of Republican Motherhood becomes unsustainable as home fails to police the purity of its own identity and to exclude all that is other. Set up to divide who owns the land from who doesn't, borders may legally authorize the possession of the land but they can neither erase the violent origin of the borders nor ethically legitimize the ownership. By dramatizing the vulnerability of the bordered space of white domesticity, Brown tacitly criticizes the ideology of Republican Motherhood and its goal to legitimize white ownership of the land by calling America the home of white mothers. The legitimacy of owning the land to cultivate it and turn it into a place for homes imbued with republican values is called into question as the exemplary home becomes a place for the symbolic return of Indian savagery when an ideal American father kills his own family like "savages trained to murder" (198). The borders of domesticity, in short, fail to purify its interiority; they cannot because the historical and political reality of America would make any part of its land what Anzaldúa calls a "borderland," anyway—the place shaped by the history of distinct human cultures encountering one another's otherness.

As the boundaries of Clara's home become permeable, her thoughts are no longer confined or defined by the "borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out" (Anzaldúa 101) either. As previously mentioned, she used to believe that "a sentiment like despair" cannot "invade" her (*Wieland* 104). But Carwin's entrance into her life changes everything, and she cannot even resist the apparently

insane idea or “frenzy” that she needs to see him “at a lonely spot, in a sacred hour” (159). Unable to decide whether she should privately confront Carwin for “the disclosure of something momentous to my happiness” despite the possibility that his “presence was predicted to call down unheard-of and unutterable horrors,” Clara experiences the splitting of her self into many voices: “What was it that swayed me? I felt myself divested of the power to will contrary to the motives that determined me to seek his presence. My mind seemed to be split into separate parts, and these parts to have entered into furious and implacable contention” (159). Again, it is Carwin who draws an unwanted desire and voices from Clara. Carwin seems to have an uncanny effect that calls upon what eludes defenses within Clara. Her mind becomes a scene for “furious and implacable contention” between conflicting intentions over which she does not seem to have “power.” Confusingly and circuitously, Clara confesses that there is a deep seated desire inside her to calmly confront Carwin, “the motives that determined me to seek his presence.”

Clara is vigorously drawn to Carwin, who represents several categories of “others” all at once. Born poor in America, he becomes a Spaniard and Catholic by choice but sounds like an English man, and looks like a poor farmer. As such, his otherness is not fixed or fixable. He is not safely removed from Euro-American selves either. Through the character of Carwin, Brown shows that the expelled noncitizens from the founding documents of the nation can never be fully obliterated but haunt the borders of white domesticity and consciousness with the threat of disruption or even

dissolution. As Carwin symbolizes otherness and its other names in the early republic, his presence makes both Mettingen and Clara's mind a borderland. He imports the Indian voice into Clara's space through his biloquism, and he makes Clara's consciousness a psychological borderland too¹³. Carwin makes both her physical space and interiority more inclusive of different and even conflicting voices that were erased in the dominant discourse of nation building. He, in short, puts on trial the borders of both Mettingen and Clara's self, making the heroine feel like a dying Indian who laments the "sudden blast and hopeless extirpation" (55) of her family and splitting her into many conflicting voices.

Before a careful examination of Clara's psychological states, I want to show how Brown racializes Clara's inner conflict by way of two important concepts that constituted the idea of whiteness: rationality and possession. As Dill has already demonstrated, Brown critiques the Enlightenment and "politics of home" of the early republic (277) through Clara's transformation from "a fully rational and enlightened agent" into "an inconstant agent whose fickle sensibility acts as a force of change and instability" (282, 275). What is missing in her analysis, however, is the racial meaning of the heroine's transformation from "rational" and "enlightened" into an irrational agent. Framing the drama of the republican woman's imperiled selfhood are the

¹³ Following the scholars emphasizing the historically allegorical elements of the novel, one might also claim that Carwin is bringing the otherness into a dwelling associated with the history of the nation itself. Shirley Samuels, for example, sees the novel as "a history of America" (45) while Doyle calls it "an eerily precise and apocalyptic allegory of Anglo-Atlantic history" (231). David Seed reads the tale as an "ideological portrayal of American history as a struggle for freedom" (114).

racialized concepts of reason and ownership. The eighteenth-century theory of race uses rationality as the prime rationale for white entitlement to colonial ownership and exploitation of nonwhites. Kant, one of the major creators of modern theories of race, for example, flatly asserts that “The race of the American cannot be educated” and are “unfit for any culture” (qtd. in Eze 116). According to him, the “Negro can be disciplined and cultivated, but is never genuinely civilized. He falls of his own accord into savagery” (qtd. in Eze 116). In short, “Americans and Blacks cannot govern themselves. They thus serve only for slaves,” and the only rational race who has “all dispositions to culture and civilization” and deserves to govern these slaves is the white race (qtd. in Mills 173). Kant conceptualizes whiteness as “a prerequisite for full personhood and . . . limits nonwhites to ‘subperson’ status” (Mills 170). If only the whites are entitled to personhood, they are the only ones who are entitled to property too. For Kant and his contemporaries, it is only natural that there exists “the utmost inequality . . . in the degree of its possessions, whether these take the form of physical or mental superiority over others, or of fortuitous external property” (qtd. in Ferguson 156)¹⁴.

¹⁴ Ferguson explains that the interconnection between reason, ownership and civilization became even more inseparable from and synonymous with each other in America where the task of cultivation of the land is more central to the national culture and policy than in Europe:

In America, even more than in Europe, improving the land epitomizes a rational, virtuous, masculine, and politically necessary control of the world. To return one more time to Locke’s chapter on property, ‘subduing or cultivating the Earth, and having Dominion, we see are joyned together’; this is ‘the Voice of Reason confirmed by Inspiration.’ But only in

Brown might seem to recapitulate the colonial logic of the eighteenth century that “The race of the American cannot be educated” and are “unfit for any culture” through Father Wieland’s failure to reform the savagery of Native Americans in contrast to his success in cultivating the land. Mettingen’s prosperity seems to suggest that the proper object for white civilization should be American land and not its people. But far from institutionalizing the idea that “the cultivation of property marks the rational working out of God’s plan” (Ferguson 157), the novel attributes the wealth of Wieland to the “cheapness of land, and the service of African slaves” (11).

The acquisition of wealth does not epitomize a rational control of the world in *Wieland*, as the owners of the land turn out to be incapable of a rational control of *themselves*. The novel disrupts the equation of whiteness with rationality by dramatizing the irrational experience of Clara and Wieland. A “sanguine reasoner” and “a mind the most luminous and penetrating that ever dignified the human form,” Wieland changes from “the glory of his species into worse than brute” (85, 175, 225). Clara too experiences a similar transformation: “I am sunk below the beasts” (253). Their story boils down to one plain truth that “no human virtue is secure from degeneracy” (275). Whereas Wieland cannot accept that “one might as justly be ascribed to erring or

America does the cultivation of property become the penumbra of transcendent truths. For if the ideal of education promotes the idea of reason everywhere, the cultivation of property marks the rational working out of God’s plan, a phenomenon that Americans will soon term manifest destiny. In the unfolding of that destiny, reason and order turn into the same thing; so, at times, does the ownership of property and the control of other people on the land. (157)

diseased senses as the other” (263), however, Clara comes to understand that the hierarchical understandings of human identity are shaped by the arbitrary logic of difference. To be more accurate, her gender *forces* her to acknowledge the arbitrariness of the order of things that govern the Western logic of identity. Falsely accused of being Carwin’s dishonored mistress and “stigmatized with the names of wanton and profligate” (119) by Pleyel, Clara acutely realizes the gender confinement that she cannot escape: “Did it not become my character to testify resentment for language and treatment so opprobrious? Wrapt up in the consciousness of innocence, and confiding in the influence of time and reflection to confute so groundless a charge, it was my province to be passive and silent” (121). Unable to resist the terms that define her new identity—terms that condemn her “as the most degenerate of human kind,” “as brutally profligate,” and class her “with the stupidly and sordidly wicked” (131, 134)—Clara begins to see that the notion of difference derives from mere opinion or preference of those who have *power* to express their opinion and preference, and difference is therefore not based on the nature of things. Clara wants to hold on to idea that “There is a degree of depravity to which it is impossible for me to sink,” but the following incidents will make her assert that she too can sink “below the beasts” (253) and become “a thing in the world worthy of infinite abhorrence” (254).

Clara’s understanding of her own self is starkly different from Wieland’s insistence on the purity of identity exemplified in his claim that “I am pure from all stain” (256). She knows that she cannot “restore its spotlessness to my character”

(160), and she learns to acknowledge that deep inside her there exist “those sentiments which we ought not to disclose,” sentiments that are “criminal to harbor” (90). While she concedes the impurity of her sensibility, she is also very “conscious of the impotence of reason over my own conduct” (256). She used to believe that she has “reason on my side” (160), and anyone who knew her was also confident of her “powers of invention and reasoning” (133). But Carwin fills her “mind with faith in shadows and confidence in dreams” (241) through his bilquism. She no longer acts reasonably as her “actions were dictated by phrenzy” (101). As she cannot control her actions—“it was phrenzy that dictated my deed” (100)—she cannot control her thoughts either; she is “without power to arrange or utter my conceptions” (106). Her “brain was turned into a theatre of uproar and confusion” (269) where “Ideas exist [in a way] that can be accounted for by no established laws” (100). She becomes more and more irrational—“My reason had forborne” (101); “I did not reason on the subject” (152); “I had no power to reason” (262). In the midst of utter confusion, the only thing that Clara feels confident about seems to be the impotence of reason: “I was confident that reason in this contest would be impotent (104). It indeed seems that “calamity has subverted my reason” (74).

Clara’s mind becomes more and more irrational and her thoughts become darker and darker. That is, the color that denotes savagery becomes the adjective for Clara’s mind. “[D]arkness suited the colour of my thoughts” (221), she describes. What other color would suit the fear of being “hunted to death”? : “I sickened at the remembrance

of the past. The prospect of the future excited my loathing. I muttered in a low voice, Why should I live longer? Why should I drag a miserable being? All, for whom I ought to live, have perished. Am I not myself hunted to death?" (221). Darkness suits the color of the narrator's thoughts because her own fate has become so similar with savages who were being "hunted to death." Darkness is the color that pervades the entire text, the "imperfect" narrative filled with "dark transitions" (179, 167). Although Clara feels "indignation and horror at" Pleyel's "charges so black" that her "heart is incurably diseased" (133), she painfully admits later that her "heart was black enough" (254). She tries to blame Carwin as the source of disorder: "Darkness rests upon the designs of this man [Carwin]" (206). But she cannot shake off the doubt that she might be as insane as her brother: "Ideas thronged into my mind which I was unable to disjoin or to regulate. I reflected that this madness, if madness it were, had affected Pleyel and myself as well as Wieland" (204). She seems to have no doubt that "the person of our enemy" (182) is Carwin. Despite her efforts to believe that Wieland is just an innocent victim of Carwin, the true "author of this unheard-of devastation" (182) and "the author of this black conspiracy" (217), however, she cannot shake the thought that the very fact that Wieland's "senses should be the victims of such delusion. . . . argued a diseased condition of his frame" (39). Much more invincible and harder to resist than Carwin's black magic is the innate madness and Clara's own "ideas" that throng into her mind despite her will and "vague images [that] rushed into my mind" (167). Irrational and unwanted thoughts often "thronged into my memory" (166), making her mind "thronged by vivid, but confused images, and no effort that I made was sufficient to

drive them away”(63). The source of madness, in short, comes from within rather than without. More worrisome than Carwin’s influence are the heroine’s own thoughts that often “grew up in my mind imperceptibly” (269) or “took a new direction” (96) on their own.

Psychological and mental restlessness created from the borderland state of mind, according to Anzaldúa can evolve into “a *mestiza* consciousness” that transcends duality: “The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended” (102). A *mestiza*’s experience of being betwixt and between clashing cultures gives her an ability to be in uncertainties and “break down the subject-object duality,” helping her heal the split between “the white race and colored” (Anzaldúa 102). This new consciousness free from racist elements, of course, can be attained only when a *mestiza* develops “a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity” through which she “sustain[s] contradictions” and “turns the ambivalence into something else” (101). Brown obviously turns the ambivalence experienced by Clara—the painfully intense confusion between clashing thoughts—into something else; Clara’s inner struggle becomes a testing ground where Brown tests the claims of white colonialism. Through Clara’s voice, Brown exposes the Enlightenment claim of a right to rationality and self-ownership entitled exclusively to whites to be falsely grounded.

After Clara’s “errors have taught [her] wisdom” (91), she comes to see herself and by extension the (white) human race in general differently. She used to think of

herself “unblemished” and her heart as “the shrine of all purity” (127-8), but her heart becomes “the seat of growing disquietudes” as “no sober emotions [grow] in my breast,” making her “bosom . . . corroded by anxiety” (87, 77, 79). She cannot “endure to relate the outrage which my heart meditated” (254)—a heart that is “black enough.” As she loses faith in her own purity, she also becomes less confident in her self-possession. She used to believe that “I was so much mistress of my feelings” (66), but “confused and panic struck,” she “cannot describe the state of my thoughts” correctly anymore (75, 98). Not only does she lose control of her own thoughts and feelings, but her own self comes to be “mastered” by her own emotions, “unconquerable apprehensions” (96), and impulses. “I was transported by my terrors” (96), describes Clara, casting “terrors” as the agent and her own self as the passive object to be moved by them. The “hateful and degrading impulses . . . controuled me” and makes her the victim of the “passion . . . which obscures our understanding” (93). Clara’s narration is filled with the vocabulary of insecurity and phrasings that suggest the “infirmity of mind” (94) and the incapability of self-government; she talks about the “passion which controuled me” (94), the “Surprize [that] mastered my faculties” (98), “Images [that] assailed me anew,” and “the terrors which . . . almost incapacitated me” (110). Even before she is assailed by her own brother, she has to “contend with those fears” (96) and her own uncontrollable thoughts. Even before she becomes the victim of the familial violence, her “mind became the victim of this imbecility” (95). The meaning of this intense experience of fear is not lost on the heroine: “Alas! nothing but subjection to danger, and exposure to temptation, can show us what we are. By this test was I now tried, and found to be

cowardly and rash” (253). Clara used to proudly say that she “was a stranger even to that terror which is pleasing” and “not fearful of shadows” (52) as she “was habitually indifferent to all the causes of fear” (64). But now she realizes that she is “easily swayed by fear” (232) and admits that “It is true that I am now changed” (269). Whereas Wieland insists on “the unchangeableness of his principles” (186) and “the purity of my intentions” (200) till the end, Clara learns to accept without resistance her own weaknesses and other human beings’: “I have lost all faith in the steadfastness of human resolves” (111).

Essential and central to white colonialism is the idea that the world can be owned by the thinking (white) mind and formed in its mirror image. But what happens to white land ownership if the white mind turns out to be as irrational as savage or even susceptible to “a phrenzy far more savage and destructive than” that (214)? What if a model citizen, “the glory of his species” (225) and “the first of women” (138) of her race turn out to be incapable of possessing their own selves? This question Brown raises through his “test” of selfhood. He rebuts the fantasy of a white exclusive command of consciousness and, by extension, the white entitlement to property. Clara starts out not just as the “mistress” of her own feelings but also as a “young, beautiful, and independent” woman capable of “administering a fund, and regulating an household of my own” (141, 24). Part of her “completeness,” according to Pleyel, could be glimpsed in the manner in which she arranges her things. “Even the arrangements of your breakfast-table and your toilet,” Pleyel remembers, were worthy of “assiduous study,

and indefatigable imitation” (140). Clara can be “an example so rare” (139) in no small part because of her property. Without being propertied, how can she be independent and a capable administrator of her own home? How else can she display that her “heart was touched with sympathy for the children of misfortune” and her “sympathy was not a barren sentiment” except by making her “purse . . . ever open” for the “wretches whom my personal exertions had extricated from want and disease” (75)? Clara reveals the possession of an upright mind through the upright use and management of her possessions—that is, all before she realizes that she has less control of her own self than she wanted to believe. As the equation of whiteness with rationality is called into question, the equation of rationality with the rights to property does not seem to work in favor of Euro-Americans anymore.

If Clara is no longer certain of the mastery of her own self, Carwin is: “Being *master*, by means of your journal, of your personal history and most secret thoughts, my efforts were the more successful” (my emphasis 240). He finds a key to the heroine’s closet where she keeps her father’s manuscript of his memoir and her journals; Clara needs not just her own house but the house with the archive of her own family history. That way, she makes a claim not just to her own property but also to the lineage of Saxon aristocracy. It is this claim to the property, genealogy, and the secrecy of innermost thoughts that Carwin takes possession of by freely invading the narrator’s home and containing the key to the closet—a literal symbol of “the key to your inmost soul” (235). He even claims a conjugal ownership over Clara’s home:

Your house was rendered, by your frequent and long absences, easily accessible to my curiosity. . . . My intercourse with your servant furnished me with curious details of your domestic management. I was of a different sex: I was not your husband; I was not even your friend; yet my knowledge of you was of that kind, which conjugal intimacies can give, and, in some respects, more accurate. The observation of your domestic was guided by me. (234)

A peculiar kind of intimacy binds Carwin with Clara by way of a domestic laborer. With Judith's help, Carwin "scrutinized every thing, and pried every where" in Clara's house (234). Clara is no longer the mistress of her own domestic space, as her observation is guided by Carwin. He becomes the true master of Clara's servant, and he keeps the heroine from her own summerhouse by ventriloquizing the murderers' voices so that he is not "interrupted in the *possession* of it" (my emphasis 232). Not just Clara's reputation but also her mastery of her own possessions is put into danger by Carwin.

Having no home, Carwin can be at home anywhere as he can become "a native" of any country "when he chose to assume that character" (77). Having no property of his own, he can be the "master" of any place he wants. Having no title, he still possesses land. His mode of ownership, in other words, resembles Native Americans' attitudes towards land that is not bound by legal concepts. Many Euro-Americans saw the "absence of property and proprietary rights" in the culture of Native Americans as constituting "the very heart of Native 'barbarism'" (Perdue 103). In a lecture given in

1787 Samuel Stanhope Smith has explained that because “a savage, having hardly any notion of property, except in those things which he has in present occupation, takes, without scruple, what he wants, and sees you do not need” (210). If Brown contrasts Clara’s approaches towards subjectivity with Wieland’s, he also compares the differences between Carwin’s relation to property and the heroine’s. Clara has an almost inexplicable attachment to her own house and possessions of her own that is not shared by her brother. As for the reasons why she has to have her own home, even she herself “can scarcely account for my refusing to take up my abode with him” (24). Even after the house becomes “the scene of so much turbulence and danger,” she expresses the “determination to become a tenant of this roof” (122-3). It seems obvious that her “fortune” should be included in the list of the things that she would never give up. “[M]y purity, my spotless name, my friendship, and my fortune” (119) are the things she would never sacrifice. Clara’s insistence on her proprietary rights is among the things that make her all the more “civilized.” Theda Perdue showed that the culture of the early republic “linked the absence of property and the looseness of [Indian] women” (103)¹⁵. Native Americans’ different notion of property was often cited as the sign of their failure to establish the fundamental institutions of civilization and nation. Property helps create

¹⁵The tendency of Anglo-American culture to link property with female sexuality is also revealed through the double meaning of “profligate” as both sexual and economic wantonness. Tellingly, it is the word that Pleyel uses to condemn Clara: “O most specious, and most profligate of women!” (119). When Clara turns from rational into irrational, she also falls from property to property sold to Carwin (“thou hast sold thy honor” (119))—an interesting coincidence.

citizens, according to S. Stanhope Smith, as he “is attached to his country by property,” but the absence of property in Indian culture “render[s] the relinquishing of his native region a much less sacrifice to the savage, than to the citizen” (397). Smith universalizes as a natural condition of nationhood the European definition of citizenship that is not universally distributed even among Europeans: the definition of citizenship that excludes those without property. If only the capacity to own and sell property could transfer full citizenship, Indians do not even deserve to be citizens for their inability to develop the conception of property to begin with. Having no concept of property does not necessarily mean that he is less than civilized, however, because he still can be “enlightened by reading and travel” (84) like Carwin. Like Indians, Carwin seems to have no allegiance to his own country, but far from being unable to be a citizen of a nation, Carwin can become a native of any nation.

In the figure of Carwin, Brown addresses the intricate conceptual relation between property, nationhood, and rationality—the concepts that constitute white colonialism. Carwin breaks down the binary oppositions between savage and civilized, propertyless and propertied. He embodies the paradox that one can belong to anywhere when he does *not* belong to anywhere. He translates propertyless into access to any property: “All places were alike accessible to this foe, or if his empire were restricted by local bounds, those bounds were utterly inscrutable by me” (97). Everything that Clara used to believe to have—her own self, rationality, and her demesne—is under the siege of Carwin’s “empire,” and by extension, the “enlightened” assumptions of white

ownership come to be contested as well. What Brown presents is not the assurance about the bright future of the “infant empire” but the gloomy prediction that the family that was seen to represent the glory of (white) human species would only “leave to the world a monument of blasted hopes and changeable fortunes” (172)

John Carlos Rowe has maintained that Carwin represents the “‘foreign’ or ‘savage’ immorality that America must purge by way of a rational social order that would justify the new nation’s domestic and foreign policies” (26). Who actually disappears from the nation, however, is not Carwin but the Wielands. When Carwin appears to become a non-threatening citizen of the nation who “engaged in the harmless pursuits of agriculture” (273), Clara “leave[s] the country forever” for “the ancient world” (212. 271), namely the place of her ancestors. Besides, there might be no point in purging Carwin’s immorality and otherness. For what is uncannily revealed through his “foreign” and “savage” crime is the foreignness and savagery *within* a Euro-American self. Far from performing the “task of creating a vague consensus about the civic virtues and identifying qualities of the American by demonizing other peoples and cultures” and establishing “boundaries distinguishing U.S. citizens from noncitizens” (Rowe 27), Brown exposes the near impossibility of performing the task. Any attempt to fix identity fails in *Wieland* as Brown frustrates the narrative expectation to get a singular meaning of identity. Till the end of the story, whether Carwin is “Ruffian or devil, black as hell or bright as angels” (264) remains “a mystery still unsolved” (183), and whether “Carwin . . . or heaven, or insanity, prompted the murderer” (184) is not solved either.

Like Carwin, Theodore never achieves a stable identity.. The dubiousness of Carwin, “whether he were an object to be dreaded or adored, and whether his powers had been exerted to evil or to good” (81) seems to pose threats at the start, but what is more disquieting turns out to be the tormenting confusion as to how to define Theodore Wieland: “Presently, I considered, that whether Wieland was a maniac, faithful servant of his God, the victim of hellish illusions, or the dupe of human imposture, was by no means certain” (214).

The boundary between civic virtue and savagery can never be as secure as Euro-Americans wish it to be. Wieland’s “inhuman” violence that is “worthy of savages trained to murder” (198) forces Clara to acknowledge that the supposed difference between the colonizer and colonized is undermined by the real sameness between them. The question she is left with is the ontological one as to how to act when the rational self-image of Euro-Americans is broken. How can she keep herself from the further disintegration of her own identity? By defending against her own sympathy towards the other and turning the object of sympathy into a dreaded object, an object of hate. In order to restore herself to the “role white women played as authorizing figures” (“Subject Female” 482) in American colonization, Clara clings to the kind of feeble identity that othering and hating the object of sympathy brings her. The one who made the current of sympathy surge through her has to become the “evil” object of fear and disgust, the “most fatal and potent of mankind” (57). To the extent that Clara uses the vocabulary of demonization in presenting Carwin, she takes part in the political

commitment of distinguishing citizens from noncitizens. But her “narrative [is] invaded by inaccuracy and confusion” (167), and at those moments of confusion she wonders if Carwin is really the “author of this black conspiracy” (217) or “innocent, but the impetuosity of his judge may misconstrue his answers into a confession of guilt” (250).

Ironically, those confusions and ambiguities that “invade” Clara’s narration might be what made Clara “a prophet of a better era” to Margaret Fuller. For Clara is at least capable of sympathetic communion with the other. In those moments of ambiguities, she also reveals how the rational self-image of the enlightened self is merely a fantasy that does not offer the stable meaning of whiteness but only produces an idealization with which one can never be identical. If “nothing but subjection to danger, and exposure to temptation, can show us what we are” (253), as Clara observes, what is revealed in white men’s subjection and exposure to the colonial venture of America? What conclusion is to be drawn from the savagery of colonial violence done in the name of civilization?

In the next chapter, I examine how Lydia Maria Child tackles this question. To envision a picture of a peacefully expanding American empire free from interracial violence, Child invents what might be called the gendered division of colonialism in her story of the original colonizers of the nation, *Hobomok*. If Brown sees the affinity between Clara and Carwin, the racialized other, distinguishes the heroine from Wieland, Child creates a heroine—Mary Conant—whose sympathizing power makes her a better colonizer than her male counterpart. Whereas Clara’s sympathy towards the other puts

her in a psychological borderland, Mary's power to win the natives' sympathy renders her a more desirable model of colonizer: the one who colonizes without violent conflicts.

CHAPTER III

SENTIMENTAL COLONIALISM IN *HOBOMOK*

Lydia Maria Child entered the literary market of 1820s by writing a novel that addresses the same issues explored in *Wieland*: the set of beliefs shaping the ideology of Republican Motherhood. Whereas Charles Brockden Brown challenges the conception of the white women as a purifying force and the reliable source of American nationhood for securing its imperialistic future, Child upholds the tenet of Republican Motherhood by giving it a narrative form in her gendered revision of American national history. Child's approach and answer to the question as to what type of white femininity would arise from American soil are very different from Brown's. Whereas Brown couches his rejection of the Republican Motherhood in horrific terms by virtually inventing the genre of American Gothic, Child reconstructs eighteenth century sentimentalism to assert white women's place in the history of American empire building. Like Brown, Child sees America as the place where white femininity is tested—and not just a place but a place *with history*.

Brown's is the story of confusions and intolerable instability created by the indeterminate and uncertain nature of ownership and occupation in the American borderland, but Child's is of the nation's coming to maturity and continuity of her history. American experience leads Clara Wieland to disprove the synonymity between whiteness, rationality, self-possession, and self-government, but Mary Conant of

Hobomok (1824) triumphantly emerges from the colonial project of “this Western Worlde” (79) as a model colonizer who embodies the peaceful expansion of white civilization. Child renarrates American history as first and foremost a story of a woman’s search for self-determination by envisioning the new nation’s imperial destiny unfolding itself as the glorious evolution of female empowerment and uplift. That is, *Hobomok* narrativizes the popular American claim that “the United States represented the culmination of the historical process, at least in terms of the status of women” (Zagarri 208) from an imperialist point of view; America stands as the culmination of progress both of women’s condition *and* empire. The very first chapter of the novel starts with a rapturous celebration of the American empire as “a perfect Eden of fruit and flowers” where “her picturesque rivers [are] the broad and sparkling mirror of the heavens” and its villages “speak so forcibly to the heart, of happiness and prosperity” (5). The rest of the novel shows that the whole story of the progress of civilization should trace back to Mary, the future mother of the republic.

Most critics agree that the focus on white womanhood facilitates Child’s rewriting of the national origin story. Nina Baym points out, for example, that the novel is “less about Indians versus whites than about white women versus white men, and especially about white women’s desire to be recognized and empowered within male-dominated society.” And the organization of the book “as a female-centered narrative about the progress of civilization could be perceived as a challenge to white male ownership of the Indian-white narrative, which is to say white male ownership of history itself”

(“How Men and Women Wrote Indian Stories” 71). Baym hence suggests that Child’s challenge to “white male ownership of history” is confined to her gendered revision of “Indian stories.” But Child’s revision of history comprises a bigger picture than Indian-white relations as she attempts to take upon herself what Wai-chee Dimock calls the “perennial task of American historians”—the task to claim that America is the unexampled and unprecedented empire exempt from decline (*Empire for Liberty* 13)¹⁶. Assuring America’s timeless permanence by making it an empire free from decay was the shared ideal by many Americans. This idea can all be traced back to John Winthrop, but it finds its most eloquent expression in Thomas Jefferson’s writings.

As Peter S. Onuf explains, an aspiration to transcend the limits of empires shapes Jefferson’s vision for the new American nation. Jefferson envisaged an empire peacefully spreading across the continent, a peaceful and progressive alternative to European empires secured through wars. The American new regime would be the “empire of liberty” that derives its “just powers from the consent of the governed” and not from force and fear. As the new regime is sustained by affectionate union, it would not fall into ruin. Jefferson’s imperial vision was echoed by many nineteenth-century historians, especially his concept of the “*novo ordus seclorum* [as] an empire with a difference—a liberating empire principally for people of European descent, that would

¹⁶ As Dimock explains such cultural imperative to envision an empire free from decay comes from the anxiety pervasive among antebellum Americans, to whom dreams of empire bring on nightmares of dissolution. See George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* for the discussion of the ways in which empire provoked not just a glorious vision for the new nation and its manifest destiny but also the fear and anxiety that it might repeat the cycle of rise and fall of all other preceding empires.

persist and expand instead of falling into decadence and decline as empires were historically prone to do” (Gustafson 112). That is, “historians explored the Jeffersonian thesis,” rendering “[c]olonialism and empire . . . central to the conceptualizing and writing of history in the United States throughout the nineteenth century” (Gustafson 112). Because Child wrote *Hobomok* when Jefferson was still a living figure, his influence on the American conception of empire during the nineteenth century makes him a relevant context for her rewriting of imperial progress of the nation in *Hobomok*. One strand of Jefferson’s imperialism that Child appropriates and rebuilds as her own—and, by extension, as Anglo-American women’s—is what I would call sentimental colonialism: the fantasy of the New World empire as a community of love governed by consent and not coercion. That sentimentality served the purpose of colonization of the nonwhite others has been amply pointed out especially in the studies of antebellum women’s writings of domesticity. Those studies that link sentimentality with domesticity tend to treat sentimentality as “a national project” that appeared in the nineteenth century (Samuels, “Introduction” 3)¹⁷. But sentimentality existed and was put in the service of national expansion even before the emergence of the domestic novel. In the writings of none other than Jefferson who undoubtedly left “an enduring legacy in the language of American nationhood” (Onuf 16) one witnesses what might be called the sentimentalization of the colonial relation between white and red Americans.

¹⁷ Samuels defines the cultural and political import of sentimentality as follows: “I want to argue that in nineteenth-century America sentimentality appears as a national project: in particular, a project about imagining the nation’s bodies and the national body” (3)

In what follows, I treat Jefferson as a precursor to what Laura Wexler has called the “tender violence” of mid-nineteenth-century sentimentalism: the “expansive, imperial project of sentimentalism” that “aimed at the subjection of different classes and even races” (Wexler 15). Jefferson’s Indian writings show that sentimentality had an imperialist dimension even before the separate spheres ideology merged coercive sympathy and domesticity, coalescing into “Manifest Domesticity.” After a brief overview of Jefferson’s sentimental vision of American empire where Indian-white conflicts disappear through the bonding of interracial marriage, I will discuss how Child develops the related idea to empower white women and represent them as the major civilizing force of the young empire. Treating Jefferson’s writings as an intertext for *Hobomok* allows us to better understand the role Child plays in the mutually influential formation of sentimentalism and imperialism. To be more specific, her novel, written after the emergence of eighteenth-century discourses of sentiment, but before their full evolution into the discourse of domesticity, enables us to recover the connections between eighteenth-century sympathy, Republican Motherhood, and the nineteenth-century discourse of the “empire of mother.” What Child accomplishes in *Hobomok* is to feminize sentimental colonialism by feminizing sentimentality itself as something that resides in women’s hearts. Child reconstructs sentimental colonialism, in other words, in order to suggest that the community of love Jefferson envisioned for the American empire could be built only when it becomes women’s empire where white women’s sympathetic heart rules as opposed to male violence.

Sentimental Jefferson and Interracial America

The last decade has seen a fundamental revision of the gendered assumption of sentimentality as feminine possession. Increasingly, sentiment is taken to be a cultural discourse circulating not just in female writings but in male texts too, and not just in the nineteenth century but tracing back to the previous century. Scholars have started to seriously consider the fact that “the cult of sentiment was propelled by male writers” (Chapman and Hendler 3) of the Scottish school of moral philosophy and their followers. If the previous studies concurred that sentimentality gained ascendancy during the nineteenth century, new studies on sentimental culture have shown that sympathy has *always* been an American project from the very moment when “the American founders relied on moral philosophy . . . to envision and realize firm ties between the citizens of the new republic” (Boudreau 21). Long before it was the language of women writers’ domestic novels, sympathy served the political purpose of bringing together diverse and radically separate individuals under the name of Americans in male texts. Among those male writers who shaped and were shaped by the sentimentalism in Revolutionary America was Jefferson.

The Declaration of Independence itself was the product of emerging sentimentalism according to Jay Fliegelman (*Declaring Independence*). In his less political and public writings, Jefferson more fully reveals himself to be a “man of feeling.” He appears to be a firm believer in sympathy and benevolence in his assertion that “nature hath implanted in our breasts a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a

moral instinct, in short, which prompts us irresistibly to feel and to succor their distresses” (“To Thomas Law, 1814” 1337). Jefferson lived the age of “sensibility” when the new form of “emotional or affectional authoritarianism” replaced the coercive form of power (*Prodigals and Pilgrims* 260), and “the virtuous republican man was measured by his capacity for affective, selfless benevolence” (Gould vi). It was also the time when “patriarchy was being sentimentalized into paternalism” (Isaac 309). All these assumptions, according to Peter S. Onuf, shape Jefferson’s “sentimental nationalism” (14). But to Jefferson his nation was the emerging American *empire*, and what Onuf calls Jefferson’s “sentimental nationalism” can be more aptly called sentimental “imperialism,” or even colonialism. Even when Onuf acknowledges that “the sentimental assumptions of his [Jefferson’s] nationalism are most clearly apparent in his thinking about three great races, European, African, and Indian, who called the American continent home” (14), he does not examine whether Jefferson’s sentimental view of racial relations was guilty of sentimentality’s complicity in the subjugation of the marginalized domestic population. Rather than linking his important observation to the recent scholarship of sentimentality, Onuf seems to regard Jefferson’s vision of sentimental union between whites and Indians as yet another ideal he failed to live up to. Granted that the sentimentalization of interracial relations in nineteenth-century America was “intended as a tool for the control of others” (Wexler 15), it seems more reasonable to question whether Jefferson’s sentimental rendering of racial others has the same intention.

Scholars attuned to the regulatory purpose of sentimentality in the early republic tend to define it narrowly as the measure of social control exercised only for white citizenry, and the discussions of Jefferson's appropriation of sentimental values often center on the civic effects of his language on white citizens. Jefferson is among those founders of the new nation who wanted to unite citizens through sympathy or "American sensibilities, the only agent believed to unite this new nation" (Boudreau 24). He renders coercive state power less coercive by redefining forced political authority into "soft compulsion": "No longer conceived of as the stigmatized power to coerce, political authority became redefined in a republican setting as the ability to secure consent, 'to command,' in Jefferson's phrase describing the Declaration, not individuals as subordinates, but 'their assent'" (*Declaring Independence* 35-36). But coexisting with the citizens of the fledgling nation were the *Native* Americans who became noncitizens of their own land. If Jefferson's use of sentimentalism in his vision of white America merits scholarly attention and analysis, shouldn't we pay equal attention to how or whether Jefferson's scheme to rule through "soft compulsion" was applied to his Indian policy too?

Sentimental values seem to have nothing to do with the Indian policy of Jefferson, the founder of Indian removal. The literary persona that Jefferson constructs as regards his fellow "Americans," however, *is* very different. He often addressed Indians as his "brother" because both white citizens and their red neighbors were "Americans, born in the same land and having the same interests" ("Letter to Jean

Baptiste Ducoigne” June 1781 qtd in Onuf 18). He also pledged that “Our system is to live in perpetual peace with the Indians, to cultivate an affectionate attachment from them, by everything just and liberal which we can do for them within the bounds of reason, and by giving them effectual protection against wrongs from our own people” (“To Governor William H. Harrison.” February 27, 1803. 1118). But in the very same letter, he orders the total removal of Indian tribes as soon as violence occurs: “Should any tribe be foolhardy enough to take up the hatchet at any time, the seizing the whole country of that tribe, and driving them across the Mississippi, as the only condition of peace, would be an example to others, and a furtherance of our final consolidation” (1118-9). To sum: try to win Indians’ affection first, but do not hesitate in robbing them of their entire land if they violently resist. If Jefferson loved Indians as his own brothers and children, that love could easily turn into the rationale for their destruction. The glaring inconsistencies between Jefferson’s compassionate words for Indians and his actual deeds towards them are not just one of the incongruities between his great humanistic ideals and actual racism. For both winning the Indians’ affection and displacing them, to Jefferson, are just the two ways to get the same goal: acquisition of Indian land.

In the 1803 letter to Harrison, Jefferson puts forward a suggestion for extinguishing Indian titles to land:

To promote this disposition to exchange lands, which they have to spare and we want, for necessities, which we have to spare and they want, we

shall push our trading uses, and be glad to see the good and influential individuals among them run in debt, because we observe that when these debts get beyond what the individuals can pay, they become willing to lop them off by a cession of lands. . . . In this way our settlements will gradually circumscribe and approach the Indians, and they will in time either incorporate with us as citizens of the United States, or remove beyond the Mississippi. The former is certainly the termination of their history most happy for themselves; but, in the whole course of this, it is essential to cultivate their love. As to their fear, we presume that our strength and their weakness is now so visible that they must see we have only to shut our hand to crush them, and that all our liberalities to them proceed from motives of pure humanity only. (1118)

Even when a white man uses the nasty trick of entrapping Indian leaders into running up debts so they would have to sell their lands to pay, he has to act as if he is motivated by “pure humanity only.” It is “essential to cultivate their love” in dealing with Indians, because it will make them more complacently give up their land and culture. Once they are ready to embrace “the termination of their history,” Indians can incorporate into white America. Those who are not willing to give up their way of living and cultural history should be removed from white society beyond the Mississippi. When instilling love into the Indian’s heart fails, Jefferson can just crush them.

As Jefferson never did anything to implement his suggestion to assimilate

Indians into white society through interracial marriage, Richard Drinnon has asserted that “[a]t best Jefferson’s championship of white-red miscegenation has to be put down as rhetoric, more of the head than the bed” (85). But I’d like to point out that this mere “rhetoric” is no less motivated by colonial desire than the policy he promoted. What Drinnon calls Jefferson’s rhetoric arises from his conscious or unconscious wishes to build an empire based on sentimental values, or love rather than force. As such, “fantasy” would be a more befitting term than “rhetoric.” Just because the vision of the interracial nation where Native Americans and white Americans all blend into one nationality was never realized does not mean that Jefferson’s expressed support for the idea was a mere disguise of philanthropy. The colonial fantasy of the sentimental bonding between the colonizer and the colonized was not integral to the American imagination, but it does have a historical and cultural import in the other part of the world. As Mary Louise Pratt has shown, in Europe during the late eighteenth century conjugal love between the colonizer and the colonized emerged as “an alternative to enslavement and colonial domination, or as *newly legitimated versions of them*” (my emphasis 86). At the time that violent local rebellions against European colonizers called for imagining worlds where “European supremacy is guaranteed by affective and social bonding” as opposed to violent subjugation and military conquest, the interracial marriage was incorporated into the “repertoire of eighteenth-century European encodings of the imperial frontier” (Pratt 97, 91). Sentimentality, almost immediately after its emergence as a major cultural value during the eighteenth century, became the mode of representing colonial relations as it gratified the fantasy of nonviolent European dominion overseas.

Sentimentality, in other words, “consolidated itself quite suddenly in the 1780s and 1790s as a powerful mode for representing colonial relations and the imperial frontier” in European travel writings and imaginative literature. Reading those texts, “the domestic subject of empire found itself enjoined to share new passions, to identify with expansion in a new way, through empathy with individual victim-heroes and heroines” (Pratt 87)¹⁸.

In America, sentimentality seemed to take a different path. For one thing, sentimentalized stories of transracial love did not proliferate in Revolutionary America not to mention that the interracial marriage was never implemented as a sanctified colonial policy¹⁹. In terms of racial imagination, then, Jefferson, the “first truly imperial president” (Drinnon 88), seems to occupy a unique place in the American imperial mind

¹⁸ So much so that Peter Hulme famously said that “sentimental sympathy began to flow out along the arteries of European commerce in search of its victims” (qtd. in Pratt 75)

¹⁹ Even in terms of literary imagination, interracial romance was scarcely sanctioned. For example, one of the boldest attempts at cross-racial coupling, in *The Last of the Mohicans*, both the Indian male and the part-African white woman die before their relationship can be consummated. Child’s position on miscegenation is almost unexampled as she keeps advocating the idea of trans-racial America built on interracial familial bonds. In “The Church in the Wilderness” (1828), for instance, Child tells “one of American fiction’s earliest trans-racial adoptive families” to advocate “French imperial policy that promoted interracial marriage and transracial kinship networks” as “represent[ing] an American history more suited to a peaceful, racially harmonious nineteenth century than English Protestantism could ever be” (Fanuzzi 88). Not surprisingly, her lifelong “career of self-sacrificing advocacy for others” (*The First Woman in the Republic* 5) also includes the advocacy of mixed-race people. For more detailed discussion of Child’s mixed-race politics, see Robert Fanuzzi’s “How Mixed-Race Politics Entered the United States: Lydia Maria Child’s *Appeal*.”

as his Indian addresses reveal a similar conception of interracial marriage as a solution to the problems of colonial exploitation. On February 18, 1803, Jefferson wrote Colonel Benjamin Hawkins, the Creek agent that “the ultimate point of rest & happiness for them [i.e. Native Americans] is to let our settlements and theirs meet and blend together, to intermix, and become one people” (“To Benjamin Hawkins” February 18, 1803, 1115)²⁰. He reiterates the same point towards the end of his second term in a letter to Captain Hendrick, an Indian leader:

When once you have property, you will want laws and magistrates to protect your property and persons, and to punish those among you who commit crimes. You will find that our laws are good for this purpose; you will wish to live under them, you will unite yourselves with us, join in our Great Councils and form one people with us, and we shall all be Americans; you

²⁰ Again, it is important to note that Jefferson’s intention to assimilate Native Americans into the white civilization first by converting them into yeoman farmers and later through marriage was inseparable from his plan to reduce the land they held. In the 1803 letter to Hawkins, Jefferson explains his “personal dispositions and opinions” regarding the Indians and the rationale behind the policy of assimilation as follows:

The promotion of agriculture . . . and household manufacture, are essential in their preservation, and I am disposed to aid and encourage it liberally. This will enable them to live on much smaller portions of land, and indeed will render their vast forests useless but for the range of cattle; for which purpose, also as they become better farmers, they will be found useless, and even disadvantageous. While they are learning to do better on less land, our increasing numbers will be calling for more land, and thus a coincidence of interests will be produced. (1115)

As an Indian agent, then, Hawkins is “peculiarly charged with . . . promot[ing] among the Indians a sense of the superior value of a little land, well cultivated, over a great deal, unimproved” (1115) The assimilation policy is motivated by the same political goal of Indian removal, for both emerged to comply with the demands of United States citizens for land.

will mix with us by marriage, your blood will run in our veins, and will spread with us over this great island. (“To Captain Hendrick, the Delawares, Mohicans, and Munries” December 21, 1808.)

Jefferson’s vision of national greatness and expansion seems to include his Indian “sons” as they are imagined to be peacefully spreading over the continent with their white brothers, forming one American family through marriage. Another letter written on the same day seems to confirm Jefferson’s earnestness to incorporate Indians into the national family: “temperance, peace and agriculture will raise you up to be what your forefathers were, will prepare you to possess property, to wish to live under regular laws, to join us in our government, to mix with us in society, and your blood and ours united will spread again over the great island” (“To the Miamis, Powtewatamies, Delawares and Chippeways,” December 21, 1808.).

The “most acceptable metaphor for the American experience,” according to Richard Slotkin, was Indian wars (68). Jefferson himself wanted to “pursue them [Indians] to extermination, or drive them to new seats beyond our reach” (qtd. in Drinnon 98). But this desire to regenerate the nation through violence also coexisted with the longing for a nonviolent empire in Jefferson’s imperial vision, a vision couched in sentimental terms of white paternalism. He presents himself as a sentimental father worrying over the red sons’ future. During his first presidency, Jefferson became more paternalistic towards Indians; he stopped calling them his brother and started to call himself their “father.” In his early years as a president Jefferson sometimes responded to

his Indian “brothers” in a rather egalitarian tone. On January 7, 1802, for instance, he saluted ‘our brothers’: “Made by the same Great Spirit, and living in the same land with our brothers, the red men, we consider ourselves as of the same family; we wish to live as one people and to cherish their interests as our own” (“To Brothers and Friends of the Miami, Potawatomi, and Weeakus”). But he “soon settled into saluting delegations as ‘Children,’ ‘My Children,’ ‘My son’” (Drinnon 88). No longer equal brothers to Jefferson, his Indian sons are now the object to teach, of all things, how to become American. Indians were no longer natural “Americans, born in the same land and having the same interests.” Only after his Indian children accept the superiority of white civilization, will they “form one people with us, and we shall all be Americans.” They should willingly give up their way of life and surrender to “our laws” to peacefully coexist with the whites. Otherwise they will totally disappear: “Instead, then, my children, of the gloomy prospect you have drawn of your total disappearance from the face of the earth, which is true, if you continue to hunt the deer and buffalo and go to war, you see what a brilliant aspect is offered to your future history, if you give up war and hunting” (“To Captain Hendrick, the Delawares, Mohicans, and Munries” 1808.). As a father he wants only the best for his sons, but as a non-tyrannical father, he cannot force and compel Indians to give up their rights to decide whether to resist the tide of civilization. There’s only so much a father can do. Sentimentality allows Jefferson to assume moral superiority without taking moral responsibility for his red children’s disappearance. At the same time, the rapacious settlers are exempt from responsibility too. The fact of white encroachment either simply disappears or is metaphorized into the

nonhuman wave of civilization represented by “our laws” in Jefferson’s reasoning; it is not the greed of settlers but the bad land management of using it as a hunting ground that would inevitably lead Indians to disappear.

The sentimental subject that Jefferson self-fashions in his Indian addresses is the white imperial subject ready to sympathize with only those accepting the universal superiority of white civilization. Only those who recognize the affection and good intention of the “great white father” would be properly civilized under the paternal protection. The civilizing force is personified in the paternal figure that Jefferson tries to demonstrate by depicting himself not as a political authority but as “a true and affectionate father” (“To the Miamis, Powetewatamies, Delawares and Chippeways” 1808). The cultural metaphor of the “Great White Father” allows Jefferson to pose as a benevolent father as if he is not a president who represents the coercive state power. Jefferson turns governmental policies into friendly advice and concerns: “Let me entreat you, therefore, on the lands now given you to begin to give every man a farm. . . . If the men will take the labor of the earth from the women they will learn to spin and weave and to clothe their families. In this way you will also raise many children, you will double your numbers every twenty years, and soon fill the land your friends have given you” (“To Captain Hendrick, the Delawares, Mohicans, and Munries” 1808)²¹.

²¹ Note how Jefferson’s self-fashioning of a white sympathetic father entails the construction of the Native Americans as the recipient of benevolence—the beneficiary of “the land your friends have given”—as opposed to the indigenous people of the land. Jefferson’s use of the language of benevolence suggests that the process of constructing

If “the sentimental fiction” is the mode of perception that pervaded not only the literary imagination but also the entire national culture in nineteenth-century America, Jefferson deserves to be ranked as one of the earliest writers of it. “Sentimental fiction,” according to Wexler, is more than just a literary genre but “the myth that widespread instruction in domesticity, and vigorous pursuit of social reform based explicitly and insistently on affective values, were ever really intended to restore the vitality of the peoples that domestic expansion had originally appropriated” (18). Wexler’s definition of sentimental fiction as a cultural myth emphasizes the inseparable link between sentimentality and domesticity, and how both were enlisted in the service of “domestic expansion.” The exact period when the convergence of sentimentality and domesticity happened, however, is not clearly explained in her study. As she follows a now historically outdated understanding of sentimentality as “a domestic ideal set forth ‘as a value scheme for ordering all of life in competition with the ethos of money and exploitation that is perceived to prevail in American society’” (15-6), Wexler inadvertently slips from sentimentality to her subtitle’s reference to “domestic fiction.” But the very conflation of sentimentality with women and the private space of the home was itself a rather “novel and remarkable” change that came about only in the mid-nineteenth century (Howard 230). Earlier discussions of sentimentality and domestic

white male citizenship around the concept of benevolent agency—the ability to offer charity and help as opposed to be merely sympathetic towards the racial others—might have begun earlier than Susan M. Ryan suggests. In her study of antebellum culture of benevolence, Ryan shows that the language of benevolence enabled white male citizens to “claim a caretaking quality that might counterbalance the aggressiveness and expansionism for which they were becoming known” (*The Grammar of Good Intentions* 5).

fiction tend to ignore the fact that sentimentality originally emerged in the eighteenth century as the concept that emphasizes the moral function of sympathy and sensibility, a concept that was *not* exclusively linked to domesticity. With the emergence of “separate spheres,” however, June Howard explains, “sentimentality—first framed as a mode of embodied thought that enabled connection and entailed humanitarian concern for others—was enlisted in the service of an ideology that still affirmed the value of ordinary life but tended to concentrate caring into the relatively narrow confines of middle-class families” (235). Scholars writing on sentiment, ranging from Ann Douglas to Jane Tompkins, along with Wexler, do not carefully distinguish sentimentality from domesticity. Rather, they tend to treat both sentimentality and domesticity as the forms of one concept: female influence emanating from women’s space. Overlooked in these discussions is the fact that sentiment originally meant a type of compassion that was *neither* confined to domestic space *nor* female. Jefferson’s sentimental gesture prompts a consideration for the historical process that wove sentimentality, femininity and domesticity together—a process into which Child participates through *Hobomok*.

Sentiment was feminized with the rise of the middle-class and the domestic woman. And the white middle-class women’s rise as the carrier of the sentimental power of moral influence coincided with the intensification of the national drama of manifest destiny. As Amy Kaplan has explained, “the discourse of domesticity was intimately intertwined with the discourse of Manifest Destiny in antebellum U.S. culture. The ‘empire of the mother’ developed as a central tenet of middle-class

culture between the 1830s and 1850s, at a time when the United States was violently and massively expanding its national domain across the continent” (24-5). But even before the discourse of domesticity has gained its full ascendancy, and merged with the ideology of Manifest Destiny, Jefferson justified American expansion on the grounds of white domestic norms. To him, the ultimate goal of civilizing Indians was to instruct them in white domesticity and gender roles. He thought that “a culture with different ways of understanding proper roles for women and men must not merely different but ‘barbarous’” (Steele, “Thomas Jefferson’s Gender Frontier” 20). So the help that Indians need most, to Jefferson, was the white authority who can teach their men how to cultivate the land and their women how to spin and weave. Jefferson turns the task of domesticating Indians into humane duty impelled by the sympathetic “commiseration their history inspires.” He told his white citizens that “humanity enjoins us to teach [Indians] agriculture and the domestic arts” (Second Inaugural Address March 4, 1805).

It is important to remember at this point that Jefferson represented himself as the paternal figure ready for the task of civilizing Indian sons. As we have seen in his Indian letters, Jefferson conceals the political nature of the colonial relations of control and resistance through the language of paternalism, rendering the white-Indian relation as the patriarchal relation among men. Jefferson’s sentimental colonialism, in other words, is gendered male. If Jefferson is one of the first writers who “inaugurated a long national tradition of resting American superiority on its

domestic order” as Amy Brian Steele suggests (19), his exaltation of American domesticity differs from the later writers on domesticity in one important aspect. Rather than celebrating home as an empire of “mother” and glorifying white women’s civilizing force, he uses the fact that American women are allowed to be domestic unlike Indian women as the ultimate proof of American *men*’s superiority. He famously said that only “civilization” can teach men to respect women. Only civilized men are able to “subdue the selfish passions, and to respect those rights in others which we value in ourselves” (*Notes on the State of Virginia* 185-6). “Were we in equal barbarism” with Indians, he asserts, “our females would be equal drudges” (*Notes* 186). To Jefferson, the status of women in a society is the measure of civilization, but women are *not* civilizers. Only white men know how to “subdue the selfish passions” and, by extension, to tame the uncivilized Indian hypermasculinity. Jefferson’s celebration of the superiority of European gender norms allows a self-justifying and self-congratulatory understanding of the colonization of the continent, through which he imagines Indian resistance not as the manly striving for independence but merely as savage rejection of civilization. Unlike Indian fathers who are accustomed to domestic tyranny over women, a sentimental father like Jefferson might be able to persuade his Indian sons to take up farming so that their wives could be domestic.

The Feminization of Sentiment in *Hobomok*

As a precursor of sentimental colonialism, Jefferson offers valuable context for

the cultural work Child performs in *Hobomok*. Most importantly, his texts help reconstruct the rhetorical and narrative contest in which Child participates: the contest over who can represent the project of building the American empire through consent as opposed to conquest. Whereas Jefferson fuses sentimentalism with colonialism through the figure of the sentimental father, Child reshapes sentimentality as the virtue belonging characteristically or exclusively to women's hearts. *Hobomok*'s contribution to the feminization of sentiment, however, has not been fully investigated in the studies of the novel. Critics agree that Child's first novel revises the patriarchal script of the nation through the heroine, the sentimental center of the text, but the very historical transformation of sentiment to which the novel contributes is not taken into consideration in most readings of the novel.

Hobomok reconstructs a story about first-generation New England as a story about romance. Roger Conant falls in love with an aristocratic woman and marries her despite her father's rejection. Dissatisfied with his life in England and devoted to Puritanism, he brings his family to the New World where he repeats the paternal interdiction when his daughter, Mary, falls in love with an Episcopalian, Charles Brown. Forbidding his daughter's marriage to Charles for religious reasons, he even expels the young Episcopalian from the Puritan settlement, forcing him to return to England. Having a sick mother, Mary remains in America to nurse her. After her mother's death Mary hears that Charles is shipwrecked. Gripped by grief and anger over her father, Mary elopes with a valiant Indian, Hobomok, and marries him. Having a child together,

Mary and Hobomok become a happy Indian family until Charles returns after three-year absence. Recognizing that Mary's love towards Charles predates their marriage and knowing that Mary still loves Charles, Hobomok divorces her. Leaving Mary and their son free to start a new family with Charles, Hobomok flees and Mary marries Charles. Through the plot of interracial romance Child imagines the potential of interracial sympathy leading to the familial and sexual bond between a white woman and an Indian. Mary and Hobomok do share mutual sympathy, but even this emotional exchange leads to an imperially correct outcome in the novel.

As the heroine's feelings have much significance in *Hobomok*, critics have rightfully focused on the workings of feminine sentiment in the novel. Many of them start from the gendered premise that men and women inhabit distinct affective realms. Laura Mielke, for example, takes for granted the identification of femininity with sympathy when she claims that *Hobomok* envisions "a peaceful relationship between American Indians and Euro-Americans through an emphasis on maternal bonds and the sympathetic responses they elicit" (18). Women represent heart and "the natural flow of sentiment" in the novel whereas the Puritan fathers exhibit "theocratic repression and religious fanaticism" (Ryan, "Republican Mother and Indian Wives" 36). *Hobomok* also shows "how a woman has softened the Puritan male heart and thereby created a better society for all. For all, that is, except Indians" (Baym, "How Men and Women Wrote Indian Stories" 71). These critics unwittingly naturalize the gendered assumption of sympathy as the feminine quality, but the correlation of the binaries masculine/feminine

and antipathy/sympathy is precisely what we need to explain if we are to properly understand the cultural work Child performs.

I suggest that Child be treated as one of the writers who contributed to the process by which American sentimentality became assigned to a feminine heart, and I will relocate Child's feminization of sentimentality in the context of the correlated development of a new national political identity and the period's westward expansions. By putting her first novel in the context of sentiment's entanglement with colonialism or what I call sentimental colonialism, I will examine and evaluate how Child responds to the call for creating the emotional script for the colonial relation in the newly emerging empire. What drives the plot of her novel is the need to imagine America as an unexampled empire built through the voluntary consent as opposed to conquest and subjugation. Like Jefferson, Child envisions the American empire as a peaceful empire that conquers not through violence but through influence. She gives a narrative form to the fantasy of a sentimental empire where conquest and servitude have no part by turning the question about how to build such an empire into a question about *who* is more suitable for the task; if an empire based on sympathetic bonding is to be built, which gender is more capable of sentimental affection? To raise and deal with this question, Child contrasts white women's colonizing force with white men's by showing that women are better at governing by influence and persuasion than men. Puritan men and women, she writes, were unconsciously participating in "the great game of nations—a game which has ever since kept kings in constant check" (101). Child puts

her story in the context of sixteenth century colonial competition between European empires. Even though the first settlers “could not foresee the result of the first move which they were unconsciously making,” they were nevertheless starting the glorious history of “the American empire” (100-1). By transforming the wilderness, and by becoming players in the game of imperial competition, Child’s Puritans were also participating in the contest over who will rise as an imperial subject worthy of national remembrance, a competition that is narrativized through recourse to the genre of historical romance.

The first chapter of Child’s “New England novel” puts “our earliest history” (3, 4) in a rather abstract movement of empire or *translatio imperii*, a trope often used by American authors as “a way of insisting that English culture improved as it shifted again westward to America and away from Europe” (Tennenhouse 13). Filled with “national pride” of the “thriving villages of New England” that blush “into a perfect Eden of fruit and flowers,” the narrator relates the “remembrance of what we have been” two centuries ago (5):

God was here in his holy temple, and the whole earth kept silence before him! But the voice of prayer was soon to be heard in the desert. The sun, which for ages beyond the memory of man had gazed on the strange, fearful worship of the Great Spirit of the wilderness, was soon to shed its splendor upon the altars of the living God. That light, which had arisen amid the darkness of Europe, stretched its long, luminous track across the Atlantic, till the summits of the western world became

tinged with its brightness. During many long, long ages of gloom and corruption, it seemed as if the pure flame of religion was every where quenched in blood;--- but the watchful vestal had kept the sacred flame still burning deeply and fervently. Men, stern and unyielding, brought it hither in their own bosom, and amid desolation and poverty they kindled it on the shrine of Jevovah [sic]. (5-6)

America is the place where the failed religious rebirth of England can be completed. Its history began when the Christian “light” of Europe removed “the strange, fearful worship of the Great Spirit of the wilderness” from the “desert.” At the outset, the novel seems to reproduce the male voice of the national narrative about “stern and unyielding” founding fathers. But the myth of Puritan martyrs battling God’s enemies in the desert gets to be called into question as the narrator directs the reader to “[t]he varying tints of domestic detail” or the story of female sacrifices “already concealed by the ivy which clusters around the tables of our recent history” (6).

Concealed by the patriarchal account of national origin is the tragic story of noble women who dutifully follow their husband and father to the New World and suffered death as a result. *Hobomok* tells the story about white women who willingly gave up “the substantial plum puddings of England” for “hominy and milk” out of love. (97) A Puritan man of “unyielding pride” (95), Roger Conant brings his wife and daughter to the wilderness. And because of the “poverty which his religious opinions had brought upon her” Mrs. Conant droops and dies in the howling wilderness (119). The heroine’s mother meets a divine death with “the celestial smile of a dying saint”—

“I die happy in the Lord Jesus” (108). Lady Arabella is another aristocratic woman who gives up her country for “the plans of her honored husband” (107) and dies, telling him that she hears “the angels singing. ’Tis time for me to go” after “shedding . . . unearthly light over her whole countenance” (110-1). They are “[b]oth alike victims to what has always been the source of woman’s greatest misery—love—deep and unwearied love” (111). Whereas women “always” act out of “love,” Puritan men are depicted as incapable of sympathy. Mr. Conant is “the rigid Calvinist” whose “feelings were too rigid and exclusive to sympathize with a young heart” of his own daughter (8, 114). He “had not given her his confidence and sympathy” for his “habitual asperity had triumphed over natural affection” (126, 9). He cannot even offer “one look of tenderness, one expression of love” (122) that his daughter so desperately seeks after she hears a rumor that Charles, her lover driven from Salem for attempting to establish an Episcopal church in the community, drowned in a shipwreck. Blinded by “the narrow prejudice of the time” (106) and mistaking “the voice of selfishness for the voice of God” (119), Mary’s Puritan father is the exact opposite of “the mild, soothing spirit of her mother” (114). In a Puritan wilderness where “the heartes of men are as harde and sterile as their unploughed soile” (79) it is up to white women to keep the force of love and sentiment for without such maternal presence “at home all was dark and comfortless” (148). American history is re-written as a story about white women’s “painful sacrifice . . . made with serenity” (79) and how they “could endure such trials,” having the strong mind “fortified against them” (98). At once “victims” to love and the indomitable champions of it, the stories of Mary’s mother and Lady Arabella tells of the

untold sacrifice nobly made for the colonization of the land. Heroic as their sacrifices might be, however, they are less heroes than victims. Their tragic death seems to imply that white women are the victims of male enterprise of the colonization, and such commemoration of white women as the victims of the colonial enterprise implicitly negates its real victims: Native Americans.

Tracing three generations of women's writing about the frontier from 1630 to 1860, Annette Kolodny shows how "during her earliest years on this continent, the Euro-American woman seems to have been the unwilling inhabitant of a metaphorical landscape she had had no part in creating—captive" (6). But they "gradually went from feeling themselves 'shut up . . . in the woods' to celebrating 'a garden interspersed with cottages, groves, and flowery lawns'" (10). This long process by which Euro-American women fashioned their identity as a more active cultivator of American land is recapitulated, so to speak, in the succession of just two generations from the mother to the heroine. Both Mrs. Conant and her daughter who "left a bright and sunny path [of England], to wander in the train of misery, gloom, and famine" (47), are first depicted as the "captives" uprooted from their own home into the desert. Unlike her mother, however, the heroine successfully emerges as a model colonizer and, most importantly, a national subject who both inherits from the British Empire—she is literally an heiress to an aristocratic lineage of the empire through her maternal line—and departs from the imperial heritage.

Mary heralds a shift of the Euro-American women's position in the colonial

enterprise from a passive victim to the sentimental “heart” of the process. Mrs. Conant dies for what she takes to be “the duty of woman”: “to love and obey her husband” (74). Her own experience on the “foreign soil” serves as an example of how “the love of woman endured through many a scene of privation and hardship” (8). Through Mrs. Conant, the novel consecrates sacrificial love of women as “the sicker she is, the more she seemeth like an angel” until finally she leaves her dying wish “with the celestial smile of a dying saint” (48, 108). Never complaining about “the troubles and distresses of a new settlement” but firmly believing that “the Lord Christ . . . shall shine the perfection of beauty” out of the Puritan community (44, 45), the heroine’s dying mother is the true martyr. The novel claims Puritan mothers’ angelic love as the counter tradition against the flawed authority of the repressive, unnatural, and unsympathetic Puritan fathers. Child contrasts the sternness of patriarchal Calvinism with the heartfelt insight of the heroine’s saintlike mother. Mary’s “noble mother” (57) proclaims that “a humble heart was more than a strong mind, in perceiving the things appertaining to divine truth” (76). Even their appearance reveals the stark difference between men and women; “In immediate contrast” with the “mother and daughter” who “possessed that indefinable outline of elegance, which is seldom entirely effaced from those of high birth and delicate education” were “the stern, hard features of Mr. Conant” (36). Men inhabit the heartless sphere of mind whereas women follow heart. Men are incapable of sentimental love when women are always impelled by love. The epigraph taken from Mary Shelley for chapter two affirms the universality of women’s capacity to love: “In court or hamlet, hut or grove, / Where woman is, there still is love. / Whate’er their

nation, form, or feature, / Woman's the same provoking creature" (15). Since *Hobomok* purports to be a *historical* novel about things that have already happened, it implies that sentimental love is a *historically feminine* quality.

Child's feminization of American sentimentalism is also a feminization of American imperialism; if America is to become a sentimental empire, it should become a woman's empire first, and the unacknowledged meaning of women's sacrifice should be claimed for the nation's origin story. For America to become a woman's empire, however, the woman in the novel should feel it as *her* empire first. The heroine decides to "depart from her country and her kindred, and to go to a land of strangers" (78) out of filial duty and endures "the mean and laborious offices which she was obliged to perform" (47) in the new land. But the new experience of the settlement does not create a new sense of belonging as her "heart" still longs for England. She is inexorably drawn to the British metropolis for her self-definition: "Indeed Sally, I'm weary of this wilderness life. My heart yearns for England, and had it not been for my good mother, I would gladly have left Naumkeak to-day" (19). Mary's body might be in the New World, but her "heart" does not. National belonging is a matter of "heart" and not geography. One major question that shapes the plot of the novel, then, is how this loyal English daughter could reshape her national loyalty and identity and become an American mother. What should happen for the heroine's "heart" to feel like an American?

Child reconfigures the question about the national feeling as the question about

motherhood. It is the maternal presence that ties Mary to the land at first. Mary makes it clear more than once that the only reason she does not go back to the “blooming gardens of good old England” (48) is her mother. When her lover Charles tells her that he “trust[s] we shall both live in England again,” she answers: “Never while my mother lives, Charles. I would not leave her even for you” (48). Eager to see “Mary restored to her original rank, and shining amid the loveliest and proudest of the land” of England (73), Charles shares the same longing with the heroine to return to “England again—again tread on her classic ground, and gaze on her antique grandeur and cultivated beauty” (73). A “graduate at Oxford, and of no ordinary note in his native kingdom,” this ardent Episcopalian “understood her feelings” (47) of having had to leave “a bright and sunny path, to wander in the train of misery, gloom, and famine” (46-7) As someone “familiar with much that was beautiful in painting, and lovely in sculpture, as well as all that was elegant in the poetry of that early period” (47), Mary embodies what is best in white civilization. Left “[a]lone as she was, without one spirit that came in contact with her own, she breathed only in the regions of fancy” and “lived only in the remembrance of that fairy spot in her existence” until she finds Charles “who loved, as she had imagined love” (47). He is the only one refined enough to sympathize with Mary’s pain of having to live amid the strangers to “treasures of mind or the rich sympathies of taste,” feeling “the loneliness of unreciprocated intellect” (91). He misses the culture of England so much, but he realizes that “with my Mary, I could happily have shared a log hut in the wilderness” (74). He would later see that even England could become wilderness without Mary: “God knoweth howe much more I have beene

in the deserte since I came hither, than while I was in the wilderness of Newe England. It was a trial I needed, to shewe me howe very deare you were unto my soule” (103). Mary’s presence could make New England even more English than England to Charles, and he would eventually return to the place where Mary is destined to be. Unlike her mother who followed her husband to the wilderness, Mary makes a man leave the kingdom for the new land. If she comes to the New World for her mother, after her demise the heroine becomes even more tied to the place as she herself becomes a type of mother only America would tolerate: a white mother of an Indian boy. She knows that because of her marriage to an Indian and being a mother of his son, “her own nation looked upon her as lost and degraded” (135). Even after her Indian husband becomes “a wanderer, for [her] sake” and will “die among strangers without one relation to speak those words of comfort and kindness” (147), leaving her free to reunite with Charles, Mary cannot go back to England with him: “My boy would disgrace me, and I never will leave him” (148). “[T]he only way that I can now repay my debt of gratitude” (148) to Hobomok—the heroine tells Charles—is to “love” his Indian son, and to love him she has to be in New England²².

²² This portrayal of New England as the only place that endorses a white woman’s motherhood of an interracial boy, of course, does not reflect the political realities of the seventeenth century as well as Child’s own time. Many contemporary readers were “shocked by what they considered the indecorousness of Child’s representation of interracial marriage” (Sweet 115). Surprisingly enough, such radical element does not keep the novel from earning the critical acclaim. Carolyn Karcher explains that the favorable acceptance was based on Child’s successful Americanization of historical romance, “the fashionable genre created by Sir Walter Scott” (xi). Nancy F. Sweet sees

What makes New England newer than England is that there could happen a “strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country” (Crèvecoeur 69). Child seems to radicalize J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur’s celebration of America as the place where “individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world” (70)²³. Even the name of the child—Charles Hobomok Conant—seems to suggest that Englishness and Indianness are blended into the new American race of the white Indian in not just a metaphorical sense of the expression. Mary’s maternal body incorporates Indianness into the national genealogy by giving birth to the boy, a figurative action of giving birth to the new nation. If the etymological root of the word “nation”—“*natio*,” meaning to be born—tells us that nation is related with the idea of birth, in Child’s revised history of national origin the new nation is born with the birth of a mixed-race child, the rightful possessor of the American soil being *native* to it. As he becomes Charles’s “own boy” (149) and his middle name gets to be erased, he also naturally loses his own

that the convincing depiction of “Mary as a character of virtue and sophistication despite her marital waywardness” was the reason why the text could still earn praises. If *Hobomok* exemplifies Child’s peculiar ability of “infiltrating radical ideas into her writings while apparently remaining within the bounds of accepted opinion” (xiii), however, I would suggest that such ability is demonstrated most tellingly through the ways in which the novel puts the radical idea of interracial marriage to the purpose of cultural colonization.

²³ Child would later have a more radical view on mixed-race politics and develop a “libertarian argument . . . for the civil recognition of mixed-race families” (97) as Robert Fanuzzi points out. Child’s *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (1833), according to Fanuzzi, reads as “a manifesto making miscegenation an inalienable right” (96).

Indianness in the course of his Harvard education. The final effacement of the Indian in this novel fulfills the contradictory desire to appropriate and expel Indianness, to lay claim to Indianness as a distinctively American trait *and* deny their right to the land.

Mary's transformation from an English aristocrat to "the mother of an Indian boy" (145) also signals the ascendance of an American female subject, forging a new female identity as a central player in civilization work—herself being the embodiment of it—who also becomes a mediator by virtue of her sexual intimacy with the Indian. In some sense she is an antithetical counterpart to the archetypal Daniel Boone figure—"the hero of a nationally viable myth of America" (Slotkin 267)—the frontier hero whose Indian experience enables him to mediate between the wilderness and civilization. Where Boone regenerates into an imperial hero through violence, however, Mary emerges as an imperial subject through her peculiar ability to make an Indian disappear without violence²⁴. The Indian is effaced in the novel not through violence but through sentimentalization. Hobomok creates a new national genealogy through fathering an Indian-white boy without destroying the existing racial order by leaving

²⁴ Mary has been compared to archetypal male heroes of American literature elsewhere in a different context. Sweet sees Mary as a "female dissenter" who reconciles "the division between . . . rising individualism and Websterian filial obligation with its conservative focus on preserving the nation's legacy": "Whereas the male heroes of nineteenth-century American fiction tend toward a radical individualism as they set out for the woods and the sea, the pious daughter-figure reconciles her self-reliance with duty to community, tradition, and family" ("Dissent and the Daughter" 109). If Mary is "an entirely new literary creation" (Sweet 107) in terms of her peculiar ability to simultaneously dissent from *and* conform to communal values, I would add that those communal interests are not just religious but colonial too.

him and letting his son's whiteness naturally outgrow his Indianness under the new white father.

Carolyn L. Karcher, in her introduction to *Hobomok*, commends the work for its radical vision of “the alternative Child offers to white supremacy and race war” (xxxii). By ending the novel with “the assimilation into Anglo-American society of the child embodying the marriage of America’s white colonists and Indian aborigines,” Child “envisage[s] assimilation in lieu of Indian genocide—and she is alone among early nineteenth-century novelists in doing so (Karcher xxxii). But even this alternative to the colonial violence manifests yet another form of colonial fantasy, and it does not so much pose a threat to the male version of the racial relation as ask men to acknowledge the imperial power inherent in white femininity. The alternative to race war offered in the novel, in other words, is offered in gendered terms of white women’s civilizing force in a way that empowers the white woman as the central player in empire building. Child uses the newly emerging national genre of Indian novel to narrativize the Anglo-American woman’s rise as a national/imperial subject.

The formation that Louise M. Newman refers to in her study of late nineteenth century U.S feminism as “The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States”—the telling subtitle that links feminism with racial discourses—began years before the postbellum suffrage movement. Newman explains that “[a]lthough white women frequently expressed feelings of sympathy and solidarity with non-white, non-Christian others, these pronouncements also served to increase their own authority, both in

relation to other groups of women, who had to uphold Christianity as a superior religion in order to gain access to the sisterhood, and in relation to white men, who were slowly having to acknowledge white women's claims to greater effectiveness in civilization-work" (8). Newman traces the developments of the white feminist discourse from 1870 to 1920, to locate the origin of the imperialist politics of white feminism, but long before the appearance of an organized movement of women's rights Child was already one of those "Anglo-Protestant women [who] forged a new identity for themselves as experts on racial questions and 'protectors' of vulnerable people" (Newman 12). For the heroine of her first novel is the very enactment of the idea that the white woman's sympathetic position towards the Indian makes her a better American civilizer.

Child ascribes colonial import to the discourse of female influence by depicting the heroine's feminine force as the most natural source for acculturation. The novel establishes Mary's cultural and social distinction through Charles's attraction to her. If it is the "sympathies of taste" (91) coming from the shared cultural refinement that draw this man "of no ordinary note" (46) to the heroine, her power over Hobomok, the "untutored chief" serves as a testimony to her innate and inborn quality or "so bright an emanation from the Good Spirit" as he sees it (84). Unlike her bigoted father, she does not try to express her godliness through "much holy and edifying discourse" (12), but it is naturally felt by the savage. Hobomok becomes "her untutored friend" as the heroine finds "a welcome relief in unlocking all her hopes, fears, and disappointments" (36) to him. As he offers something that she cannot find in her Puritan neighbors, Mary feels

that “Hobomok, whose language was brief, figurative, and poetic, and whose nature was unwarped by the artifices of civilized life, was far preferable to them” (121). This affinity between a white woman and an Indian might seem to be a challenge against “the dogmas of a culture which relegates nonwhite, non-Christian peoples to inferior status [that] necessarily entails joining with those peoples in throwing off the yoke of the Great White Father” (Karcher xxv). Child does revise colonial relations, but the revised interracial relation is still a colonial relation, a relation based on domination that involves the subjugation of one people to another.

After the reported death of Charles, Mary marries Hobomok who consoles her at her mother’s grave and expresses his desire to make her happy. Here Child emphasizes that Mary was “not altogether [her]self,” being affected by the “partial derangement of [her] faculties” or a “bewilderment of despair that almost amounted to insanity” (120). The decision made out of “sudden bereavement, deep and bitter reproaches against her father” (121), however, turns out to be intuitively wise as the Indian husband offers what her own father cannot offer: a “tender reverence” (135). Critics have treated the interracial marriage in the novel as the most radical element of it; Child explores “the potential of sympathy . . . to unite American Indians and Euro-Americans and (temporarily) sanctify interracial familial and sexual bonds” through the affectionate union of the two characters (Mielke 19), and by marrying Hobomok, the heroine “transmute[s] the errand of conquering or converting the Indian into an errand of embracing his ways” (Karcher xxiii). But the novel relates even this violation of

racial taboo in a language satisfying the colonialist fantasies about Native Americans.

When Charles returns, Hobomok voluntarily removes himself so that Mary can be reunited with Brown. At the last moment, the Indian is gone and silenced, but Mary's new, white husband remains and gets to tell "a story . . . of that savage, which might make the best of us blush at our inferiority, Christians as we are" (145). "[H]igh-souled child of the forest," Hobomok belongs not to the civilized hearth of American family but to American wilderness and "forever . . . away from New England" (140). The only white place that the novel reserves for the Indian is the private heart that remembers his devotion. The willing sacrifice and the "devoted, romantic love of Hobomok was never forgotten by its object; and his faithful services to the 'Yengees' are still remembered with gratitude," but his name itself becomes "seldom spoken of" and "silently omitted" (150). The interracial romance plot is employed in the service of romanticizing and justifying the myth of the vanishing Indian. The novel fails to imagine a harmonious, permanent place for Indians in white society, and Child's creative historiography ends up as a colonial fantasy.

Romancing Sentimental Colonialism

Hobomok gives a narrative form to the Jeffersonian dream of a sentimental empire where sentimental bonding of the two races leads to the willing subjugation of the original inhabitants by plotting the colonial fantasy through romance and

reconfiguring sentiment and gender. The model of domestic paternalism arises out of Jefferson's vision of America where the colonial subjects willingly accept the paternal protection of the Great White Father. To Jefferson, white-Indian relations are fundamentally patriarchal relationships between the paternal authority of white men and the subordinate people. Child's representation of the founding fathers, however, suggests that white men's souls might have been naturally unfit and unprepared to be a loving father to the red neighbors from the very beginning of the nation. Hobomok's "loves and hates had become identified with the English," but his heart does not necessarily respond to the "disheartening influence of the stern, dark circle" of Puritan fathers (31, 36). Whereas the male Puritanism of Mr. Conant does not create any room for emotional reciprocity with Hobomok, the unbiased and tolerant sentiment of Mrs. Conant and Mary does: "Hobomok seldom spoke in Mr. Conant's presence, save in reply to his questions. He understood little of the dark divinity which he attempted to teach, and could not comprehend wherein the traditions of his fathers were heathenish and sinful; but with Mary and her mother, he felt no such restraint, and there he was all eloquence" (85).

Hobomok sets women's natural religious feeling in opposition to men's strict and oppressive doctrine. Mrs. Conant values direct access to divine inspiration through heart over the theological knowledge of the Bible. To "know everything about religion" would not make one to discover "divine truth" if the person can "*feel* little of its power" (my emphasis 76). Mrs. Conant's belief that "a humble heart" is more responsive to

sacred messages than “a strong mind,” the novel suggests, should be the guiding vision for the nation, and not the theology of the Puritan fathers. Whereas male Calvinists act as if “the protection of the Bible needed the aid of dagger and firelock” (63), Mary’s mother plants Christianity on the land by sacrificing herself for love and becoming an angel-like figure. She also offers an alternative to Calvinism by suggesting that nature could be the more reliable source for religious inspiration than the dogmatic reading of the Bible for nature is “God’s library—the first Bible he ever wrote” (76). Child implants a female tradition of natural religious feeling in the national origin, a tradition originated in the female heart. Even during the gloomiest days of the early settlement Nature “displayed much to excite a poetic imagination and a devotional heart; but the souls of *men* were not open to the influence of nature” (my emphasis 91). Here “men” literally refers to Puritan men whose “stern piety [that] was lofty and genuine” could never bring “religious warmth into their hearts” as their faith was “deeply colored with the ignorance and superstition of the times” (91). Only women like Lady Mary and her daughter seem to have “a devotional heart” that can discern divine truth from nature.

Mrs. Conant’s idea that the religion could be purified through nature is taken up by her own daughter who creates the vision of a sympathetic God from the observation of nature. When Mary watches the evening star “sailing along its peaceful course . . . like a bright diadem on the brow of some celestial spirit,” divine inspiration of imperial magnitude hits her:

“Fair planet,” thought Mary, “how various are the scenes thou passest

over in thy shining course. The solitary nun, in the recesses of her cloister, looks on thee as I do now; mayhap too, the courtly circle of king Charles are watching the motion of thy silver chariot. The standard of war is fluttering in thy beams, and the busy merchantman breaks thy radiance on the ocean. Thou hast kissed the cross-crowned turrets of the Catholic, and the proud spires of the Episcopalian. Thou hast smiled on distant mosques and temples, and now thou art shedding the same light on the sacrifice heap of the Indian, and the rude dwellings of the Calvinist. And can it be, as my father says, that of all the multitude of people who view thy cheering rays, so small a remnant only are pleasing in the sight of God? Oh, no. It cannot be thus. Would that my vision, like thine, could extend through the universe, that I might look down unmoved on the birth and decay of human passions, hopes, and prejudices.” (48)

As Gretchen Murphy has pointed out, this passage reveals an imperial aspiration to possess “a vision that ‘extends throughout the universe’” (56). Mary wishes to have the range of the all-embracing divine light while remaining “unmoved.” Her religious liberalism is tinged with the imperial ideal peculiar to the American mind: a desire to become an imperial example rather than imperial power in the conventional sense, that is, a belief that America should play a crucial role in world history not by going abroad in search of power but by becoming an inspiration to the world. Like a divine star that

shines on the various scenes and nations, Mary aspires to transcend national borders and unite “the multitude of people” not by traveling among them but by “look[ing] down unmoved on” the world.²⁵

Woman’s natural religious feeling is developed into a religious liberalism in the above quotation, and the novel suggests that this female tradition should be the guiding principle for America by anchoring the history of a divine plan for the nation not in the theology of male Calvinism but in the heart-felt piety of founding mothers. Child elevates feminine sentiment as the redemptive “heart” of the nation. Feminine sentiment has softened the “unfeeling” (117) rigidity of men and has been more effective in proving white superiority to Native Americans than patriarchal Calvinism. Men who protect “the house of God with pistols in their sword belts” (63) might easily make an exaggerated impression upon the “poor, unlettered Indians” at first, leading them to think that “the English were the favorite children of the Great Spirit” (29). The “astonishing influence of the whites over these untutored people” is well exemplified in the very fact that “the various tribes did not rise in their savage majesty, and crush the daring few who had intruded upon their possessions” (29) when the English first arrived. White superiority over Indians, however, could readily be shaken once Indians have

²⁵ Child will later articulate a similar aspiration to transcend national borders in her *Letters from New York* (1843): “National pride and national glory is but a more extended clanship, destined to be merged in universal love for the human race. Then farewell to citadels and navies, tariffs, and diplomatists; for the prosperity of each will be the prosperity of all” (23).

guns too. As soon as Morton “sold them rifles, and taught them to take a steady and quick-sighted aim,” Indians “diminish their reverence for the English” and “boasted they could speak thunder and spit fire as well as the white man” (29). Male civilization represented by guns proves to be harmful both to Indians *and* English settlers, as it could take but one form: war. Unlike guns, female civilization represented by Mary *protects* life.

The ultimate acceptance by the native of white superiority happens in the novel when a white *woman* proves it. Possessing the “nobler principles of the soul” and “native elegance of mind” (35), Mary, “the gay young beauty who had sparkled awhile in the court of king James” (8), emblemizes the “mental riches” (78) of civilized England. The novel also deploys Mary’s physical whiteness to make her embody what is best in white civilization. It is suggested that, resembling the “pale face of Mrs. Conant” (75) and having “death-like paleness” (82, 75), she is the whitest character in terms of her skin color: “The pale loveliness of Mary’s face, amid the intense cold of the night, seemed almost as blooming as her ruddy companions” (89). While her beauty recalls the image of “a Parian statue, or one of those fair visions which fancy gives to slumber” (59), she sometimes looks like “a being from another world” as she is “so pale” (123). And she does become an exalted being above what is characteristic of earth to an Indian. The narrator explains that Mary is only “lately recalled from the home which her grandfather’s pity had offered” in England after her two brothers who left the country before her “had fallen victims to sickness and famine” in the wilderness. She is sent to

the New World “to watch the declining health of her mother” (8), but it seems as if the land holds another person needing her help in store:

Soon after her arrival at Plymouth, Mary had administered cordials to [Hobomok’s] sick mother, which restored her to life after the most skilful of their priests had pronounced her hopeless; and ever since that time, he had looked upon her with reverence, which almost amounted to adoration. If any dregs of human feeling were mingled with these sentiments, he at least, was not aware of it; and now that the idea was forced upon him, he rejected it, as a kind of blasphemy. With these thoughts were mixed a melancholy presentiment of the destruction of his race, and stern, deep, settled hatred of Corbitant. (33)

As Mary accomplishes what the Indian priests—and by extension, the Indian god—couldn’t do, she becomes the object of Hobomok’s divine worship so much so that even thinking of Mary as a romantic object is “a kind of blasphemy” to him. The work of healing by a white woman, in other words, does what male technology represented by gun can never do; it inspires undying loyalty and “reverence” from an Indian, causing him to love her “like he loves the Great Spirit” (121). With the thoughts of Mary’s superiority over his race, comes the “melancholy presentiment of the destruction of his race” as if she reminds him of the inferior savage culture that is destined to become extinct. The succession of ideas flashing through Hobomok’s mind seems to suggest the effect of white femininity. The “reverence” for the white heroine makes an Indian

willingly resign himself to the tragic fate of his race. And more importantly, rather than letting him blame the white settlers for “the destruction of his race,” she intensifies the already existing animosity between Indians by arousing a “stern, deep, settled hatred of Corbitant.”

Intuitively responding to the effect emanating from Mary’s presence—“so bright an emanation from the Good Spirit”—Hobomok desires “to copy, with promptitude, all the kind attentions of the white man” (84). Interracial relations greatly facilitate Hobomok’s acculturation as he becomes “altered so much, that he seems almost like an Englishman” after three years of marriage to the heroine (137). But even before such a transformation, Hobomok willingly becomes “of great use to . . . Plymouth brethren” (98), acting as their informant and protector out of the “gratitude for the life of his mother which [Mary] had preserved” (84). If America is destined to be a great empire, the novel seems to suggest, it is because of the founding mothers like Mary whose sympathetic heart can inspire “unlimited reverence” (84) from the colonized. Mary’s female influence on Hobomok implies that such emotional power belongs exclusively to Anglo-Saxon women; “never to Squantam or Abbamocho had he paid such unlimited reverence” like he did to “‘the child of the Good Spirit,’ as he used to call Mary” (84). Child fuses sexual fantasy with colonial fantasy by using the vocabulary of subjection to represent Hobomok’s romantic idolatry. Mary is the kind of person that “a body couldn’t look upon . . . without loving” (129). She compels spontaneous “admiration” from men, making “[e]ven the rough sailors . . . soft[e]n their

rude tones of voice, and pa[y] to gentleness and beauty the involuntary tribute of respect” (9). In the colonial setting this innateness to inspire love can also accomplish the purpose of colonization as it guarantees the willful submission from the colonized. Mary indeed “usurp[s] such empire in his heart” (84), and “her very looks were a law” to Hobomok (135). “Hobomok love her like as better than himself” (125), the Indian says, and he “continued the same tender reverence, he had always evinced” (135).

As Hobomok’s colonial submission is sentimentalized, Mary’s sentimentality is empowered. It is clear now why the novel is titled *Hobomok* when it is in fact about Mary; it should be titled thus for he is the powerful evidence for the heroine’s colonizing force. How else could the book claim female sovereignty over “the poor, unlettered Indians” (29) other than by demonstrating it through the Indian? Hobomok is the vehicle through which Mary fulfills white women’s role as the civilizing force. He is endowed with a symbolic place as his name becomes the title for “A Tale of Early Times by an American”—the subtitle of the novel—but not to the national family he himself helps to build. While the interracial union momentarily challenges the racial order of the colonial world, in the end it acquiesces to it. The rightful place for his “handsome English bird,” Hobomok thinks, is “the wigwam of the Englishman”: “Good and kind she has been; but the heart of Mary is not with the Indian. In her sleep she talks with the Great Spirit, and the name of the white man is on her lips. Hobomok will go far off among some of the red men in the west. They will dig him a grave, and Mary may sing the marriage song in the wigwam of the Englishman” (139). Readers are

allowed to think of him as a sentimental figure whose “happiness . . . so nobly sacrificed” (142) for love, but not as the victim of forced disappearance. Hobomok understands that the rule of love should govern marriage. He leaves his wife because he knows that “Mary loves [Charles] better than she does” himself (139). Yet at the same time the words Hobomok uses for the self-imposed removal invokes the geographical and racial demarcation of the removal policy. Hobomok leaves for the “far” west, relinquishing his own land for “the Englishman,” to the place where “the red men” belong to. In the figure of Hobomok, sentimentality meets the ultimate white fantasy that the Indian will somehow disappear.

Sentimentality becomes the mode through which white women and the Indian are re-membered. Child reconfigures and redefines female virtues assigned to the Republican Mother by metaphorically recovering an anachronistically feminine form of sentimentalism; sentimentality is now represented as *historically* true to the female heart. If “the encounter with Hobomok was ultimately an opportunity for Mary Conant to realize her (embodied) Republican Motherhood” (“Republican Mothers and Indian Wives” 42), the republican mother that Mary becomes, I’d like to add, also registers a significant slippage in Republican Motherhood itself. Child reinterprets the Republican Mother into a model sentimental subject in *Hobomok*, defining a moment of confluence between Republican Motherhood and sentimentality. Where the virtuous republican woman was measured by her capacity to raise public-spirited male citizens, sympathy emerges as a defining quality inhering in the feminine heart. Philip Gould examines

how an ideological transition from republicanism to sentimentalism occurs in the text without considering how that shift affects the ideology of Republican Motherhood. Child, according to him, renegotiates male republican virtue through Hobomok first by “essentializ[ing] him according to a recognizable model of gender rooted in Revolutionary republicanism” through the depiction of “his ‘manly beauty,’ ‘vigor and elasticity,’ and ‘vigorous elegance of proportion,’” and then by feminizing such manly virtues into sentimental sensitivities (“Remembering Metacom” 118). But the sentimentalization of the masculine virtue is also accompanied by another shift. Hobomok might stand as “the trope of sentimental republican manhood” mirroring the “complex and tenuous relations between republicanism and sentimentalism from the 1780s into the 1830s” (“Remembering Metacom” 116, 112). I am putting this construction of Native American manhood, however, to the purpose of revising the script for American femininity. The ideological work that Child performs through the Indian, in other words, cannot be fully understood without its ideological effect on white femininity that the author constructs. The Indian’s relation to the heroine dramatizes an axiom of postcolonial criticism that colonialism involves a reflexive process whereby the other, the object of the civilizing mission is put in the service of reconstructing the subject. Through the interracial contact the heroine becomes more than just a Republican Mother. Where a Republican Mother’s civic duty encompasses only the upbringing of the *white* male citizens, Mary extends her nurturing beyond the racial confinement. She helps her nation in becoming an empire by first assimilating an Indian, “alter[ing] [him] so much, that he seems almost like an Englishman” (137), and

then inspiring him to voluntarily relinquish his land and his “English bird” (139) to the real Englishman. Sentimentality, in short, guarantees the reabsorption of the white woman and the absorption of Indianness into the white national family, but *not* the Indian himself. The language of sentimentality might be employed to build a colonial romance, but it is not the language for extending full citizenship rights to the colonized. The nation might sentimentally commemorate his sacrifice, but that is pretty much all it can offer—the place of a nostalgic object of the national past, and *not* a place in a political body of the national present. The transition from the ideology of Republican Motherhood to the antebellum preoccupation with domesticity, a process Child’s text helps to facilitate, reflects the aspiration to imperially expand the reaches of female influence beyond the confinement of white domesticity. The imperial process is narrated as a story of an English woman’s transformation into a New England mother that reifies Anglo-American women and the place as the historical and geographic origin of “the American empire.” What the nation had become in the narrator’s day would have been unimaginable for the Puritan forefathers, even for “a gentleman, a scholar,” such as Mr. Johnson who was more “highly” and “deservedly respected” than anyone else in the settlement:

Could his prophetic eye have foreseen that the wild and desolate peninsula where he first purchased, would become the proud and populous emporium of six flourishing states; could he have realized that the transfer of government from London to Massachusetts, was but the embryo of political

powers, which were so soon to be developed before the gaze of anxious and astonished Europe; how great would have been the reward of the high-minded Englishman. But his self-denying virtue had not these powerful excitements. Who in those days of poverty and gloom, could have possessed a wand mighty enough to remove the veil which hid the American empire from the sight? Who would have believed that in two hundred years from that dismal period, the matured, majestic, and unrivalled beauty of England, would be nearly equalled by a daughter, blushing into life with all the impetuosity of youthful vigor? (100).

Even when the novel narrates the “rejoicing” (100) day of Mr. Johnson’s arrival at the settlement, it emphasizes his inability to fathom the world-historical import of his own action of “join[ing] a poor despised, and almost discouraged remnant in this western wilderness” (100) What Mr. Johnson cannot foresee, his wife does. Having confidence in “strong hands and firm hearts, as well as noble blood, engaged in this cause” of colonizing the new land, Lady Arabella predicts that America might become the place where the history of empire repeats itself: “I have heard my husband say that our own mighty kingdom was once a remote province of the Roman empire,—and who knows where unto these small beginnings may arrive?” (93). Mr. Johnson might know the colonial past, but the “prophetic eye” and “a wand mighty enough to remove the veil which hid the American empire from the sight” belong to his wife. It takes imagination to *feel* “powerful excitements” from the seemingly “wild and desolate” landscape, and

if there is one thing that men can *not* do, the novel tells us, it is to feel.

Again, it is Mary, the future mother of the republic, who can “f[i]nd much to excite her native fervor of imagination” from the wilderness and “amid all the dreariness of poverty, and the weight of affliction” (35). Being able to feel naturally, Mary at the same time is compared to natural objects like the sun (35), an evening star, a flower—in England she “had been reared with more than tenderness, like some fair and slender blossom” (78)—and, finally “a tender slip” (150). A tautological relation between womanhood, nature, and empire is conceived through the figure of Mary. Her natural feeling creates an imperial vision and power resembling natural objects, and the empire she metaphorically gives birth to will be an empire that governs and grows naturally. The circular relation between white femininity, nature, and empire culminates in the final lines of the novel, which concludes by invoking yet another natural metaphor likening the United States to “a mighty tree,” which is actually a metaphor for the heroine: “the devoted, romantic love of Hobomok was never forgotten by its object; and his faithful services to the ‘Yengees’ are still remembered with gratitude; though the tender slip which he protected, has since become a mighty tree, and the nations of the earth seek refuge beneath its branches” (150). In these final lines the whole history of America is summed up as a story about the Indian’s devotion to help grow “the tender slip” into a potent tree whose branches are abundant enough to embrace “the nations of earth.” The fantasy to build a non-violent empire through female force results in yet another imperial fantasy that *naturalizes* imperial expansion as an organic, immutable

process²⁶. Child narrativizes American history as a history of a woman's empire whose progress is contingent on and conditioned by the natural growth of the female self. If the novel places significance on "female self-determination as a basis for New World difference (Murphy 53), it also equates the expansion of woman's sphere with the expansion of the American empire, the expansive destiny of the United States which would manifest itself when the white woman manifests her civilizing force.

²⁶ Note how Child's metaphor of a naturally growing tree as the expanding American empire uncannily resembles the rhetoric of "Manifest Destiny." In 1845 Democrat John O'Sullivan proclaimed that the United States is destined "to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and . . . development of self government entrusted to us. It is [a] right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of grown."

CHAPTER IV

EN-GENDERING THE FUTURE: IMPERIALISM, GENDER, AND TEMPORALITY IN FULLER'S *SUMMER ON THE LAKES* AND *WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

America is therefore the land of the future, where, in all the ages that lie before us, the
burden of the World's History shall reveal itself.
--G. W. F. Hegel (1831)

The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American
greatness.
--John L. O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of
Futurity" (1839).

[T]he women of America are in advance of all others on the
globe.
--Sarah Josepha Hale, *Woman's Record*
(1853)

By the time Margaret Fuller wrote *Summer on the Lakes* (1843), sentimentalism had become the prevailing logic in literary treatments of Indians, a mode hard to avoid unless one makes a conscious effort, which Fuller ostensibly tries to do. "I have not wished to write sentimentally about the Indians" (143), she asserts towards the end of her travel narrative. Despite this confessed resistance to sentimentalizing the Native Americans, however, Fuller does write within the conceptual territory of sentimentalism. Structuring the record of her first real experience of Native Peoples is the same logic of

sentimentality through which Child could argue for the expansion of white women's role in empire building and ease colonial guilt. Just as Child's sympathy towards Native Americans does not lead her to dispute the erroneous assumption of her era that Indians would eventually vanish, Fuller is simply incapable of and, more importantly, uninterested in refuting the discourse of the Indians' inevitable disappearance as it became an even more universally shared assumption.

Whereas Child's portrayal of interracial sympathy focuses predominantly on its "colonizing" effect on Native Americans, Fuller considers the sympathy towards the Indian to have a "humanizing" effect on *white men*. There might be no Indians left to civilize in the near future, but the nation is still in great need of a civilizing force for the "mass [who] has never yet been humanized" (*Summer* 143)—insufficiently civilized white men who do not know how to humanely treat either the Indian or American nature. Holding firmly to the belief that American imperial progress should be that of "the unfolding nobler energies" (12), Fuller blames the nation's cruel and spiritless expansion on the materialistic and uncivilized immigrants, or "mass." Humanizing the "movements made by masses of *men*" (my emphasis 143) emerges as the major goal of America's civilizing mission—the mission that "men" alone cannot accomplish. The moral progress impeded by the male colonial enterprise could be facilitated only when the long suppressed moral source of white womanhood is recognized and given its due power. Fuller obviously inherits this line of thought from Child in figuring white women as being endowed with sentimentality, a faculty that makes them better imperial

subjects than men. Fuller also thinks of white women as the moral source for the regeneration of empire, but the moral and sentimental influence of white women is explored less in terms of its role in interracial politics of colonization than from the perspective of whiteness. Notwithstanding her critique of American imperial practice, Fuller never questions the pervasive belief that “the power of fate is with the white man” (71). *Summer*’s critique of American empire building reads better as a censure of settlers, being undisciplined and greedy, who do not deserve the great “fate” of “the white man” yet. Empire building calls for race building as it requires a white citizenry morally and intellectually qualified for this “new and great country” (65), and it is within this relation between empire and whiteness that Fuller carves out a territory for white women.

Scholars generally agree that the year of 1844, the year of the publication of *Summer on the Lakes* and *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is “a transformative moment for Fuller” (Belasco 77). It is the year Fuller begins to reveal new social interests, the “social causes that would become her central concern in both New York and Europe” (Belasco 76). A less noted aspect of this transition towards public reflections on social and political issues in Fuller scholarship is its relation to empire. Fuller’s voice against American imperial greed evidently becomes more and more vehement after 1844, but paradoxically from this growing resistance against colonial practices also emerges a gendered version of American imperialism. One continuous thread running through *Summer* and *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is the drive to

elevate the nation to its destiny of a great empire. The two texts suggest that the role of a social critic she constructs for herself is intertwined with the role of moral instructor she performs to white readers in her efforts to guide them to be fitted for the task of building a righteous empire.

Setting herself in a role of the moral instructor for the nation, Fuller also performs the cultural work of easing colonial guilt by helping her readers imagine the violent expansion as nonviolent imperial progress through two tropes: nature and time. Through these two tropes she simultaneously censures and celebrates the imperial movement. Fuller thinks that America should be an empire “naturally” spreading over the continent, being the “capital of nature’s art” that makes “Rome and Florence” look like “suburbs” (*Summer* 33). There is nothing natural about the colonial reality of westward expansion, of course, to satisfy this fantasy of a “naturally” unfolding empire without unnatural human interference. Fuller witnesses the destruction of American nature by settlers and does not hesitate to give them harsh criticism, but she posits those rude and uncivilized white men against an idealized true white race of America. The white “race” becomes the realm where racial ideals of whiteness reside whereas the actual violence perpetuated by white men are represented as the examples of individuals’ failure to live up to such ideals. Fuller separates the physical activities of empire building—that involve violence—from abstract movements towards America’s imperial destiny; the defects of American expansion stand against the unexampled empire the nation is destined to become. White settlers at the moment may look wanting and

lacking the qualities to be the rightful owners of the emerging empire, but the white race, being able to make a progress and move forward in time, *is* destined to be so.

Temporality and progress are racialized in *Summer* as the defining features distinguishing the white man from the red man, and it is in this racial framework of the two concepts that Fuller theorizes issues of gender in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, figuring white American femininity as the embodiment of millennial futurity that would secure the nation's imperial destiny. In this chapter, I will first trace how Fuller approaches white Americans' spatial claim to the land in *Summer*, and then move on to her conception of temporality in *Woman*.

Colonial Anxiety, Nature, Temporality and Gender in *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*

Part of the reason why *Summer* was so long dismissed by literary scholars was its notorious incoherence and lack of unity—a style that Perry Miller called “an intolerable monstrosity” (116). Reading Fuller's trip to the west is to read “reports on scenes alternate with random associations or with insertions of brazenly extraneous matter, especially with ad hoc poetic flights” (Miller 116). *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* suffered similar criticism. As late as 1982 David M. Robinson dismissively remarked that *Woman* is “often guilty of digression and obscurity” (qtd. in Kolodny, “Inventing a Feminist Discourse” 358). Whereas the rhetoric of *Woman* has been studied and been approached as a stylistic experiment reflecting “Fuller's political engagements” (Gustafson, “Choosing a Medium” 35), however, *Summer* has not

enjoyed similar kinds of in-depth rhetorical analyses. That is, a similar question as to whether the digressive and incoherent writing style is related to Fuller's political concerns is not raised yet. Instead, it was approached in terms of a genre. Susan Belasco Smith explains that "the episodic, digressive form" of Fuller's story is shaped by generic conventions not of the travel narrative but of "the tradition of portfolio and sketchbook writing that began at the turn of the nineteenth century and was largely an art form practiced by women" ("Introduction" xiv). A genre apt for capturing impressions and observations on everyday life, portfolio and sketchbook writing allows the writer to explore and express worthwhile thoughts and reflections that are, more often than not, fragmentary and inconsistent. One contemporary reviewer of *Summer* shows that the book was most welcomed by those who could appreciate its generic difference from a "guide book": "It is not so much a description of the beautiful lake scenery . . . as a record of her own impressions and of the recollections they called up. Accordingly, amidst scenes so novel and striking she writes not from without, but from within" (qtd in "Introduction" xiv).

Not all reflections call for the modes of expression that allow for incoherence, however. It is my contention that Fuller could not but choose a genre in which she could express conflicting ideas "from within" for her reflections and ideas about the west are rife with contradictions or colonial ambivalences to begin with. Informing the style of *Summer* is an unresolved tension between the colonial guilt that the plight of the Indian inspires and the imperial aspiration she cherishes for her nation. Fuller's record of the west is also a record of her struggle with her ambivalent feelings about her own nation,

and what we get is the author's extended conversation with herself about how to deal with the ethically questionable nature of white settlers' presence in the West. *Summer* is beset by the uneasiness with the moral question raised by American governance of the place. . Faced with the question as to "whether we are in all ways worthy to fill [the] place" of "the first possessors of our country" (131), Fuller first attempts to treat it not so much as a moral question but as an aesthetic question—a question as to which race is more respectful and appreciative of the beauty of the landscape in which they live. Even from the aesthetic perspective, however, the white men seem to be less worthy of the land than the savages. "[A]fter seeing so many dwellings of the new settlers, which showed plainly that they had no thought beyond satisfying the grossest material wants," Fuller almost denies the settlers' right to settle and comes very close to acknowledging Native Americans as the "rightful lords" of the land:

Sometimes they looked attractive, the little brown houses, the natural architecture of the country, in the edge of the timber. But almost always when you came near, the slovenliness of the dwelling and the rude way in which objects around it were treated, when so little care would have presented a charming whole, were very repulsive. Seeing the traces of the Indians, who chose the most beautiful sites for their dwellings, and whose habits do not break in on that aspect of nature under which they were born, we feel as if they were the rightful lords of a beauty they forbore to deform. But most of these settlers do not see it at all; it breathes, it speaks

in vain to those who are rushing into its sphere. Their progress is Gothic, not Roman, and their mode of cultivation will, in the course of twenty, perhaps ten, years, obliterate the natural expression of the country. (29)

Here Fuller embeds the political concerns of Indian removal in an aesthetic response to what the settlers are doing to the “natural expression of the country” and how the original owners of the “beauty . . . forbore to deform” it. It is through this rhetorical maneuver that Fuller is able to simultaneously condemn *and* promote American imperialism. Inasmuch as the progress of the American empire is aesthetically “repulsive,” that is, inasmuch as the damage is done to the “beauty” of the land as opposed to its people, the condition calls for an aesthetic remedy as opposed to just restitution to the victims. As far as the Indian is spiritually more endowed with a better sense of beauty than the white man, Fuller would want her countrymen to assimilate the Indian spirit, but she would not request any political or economic action on behalf of “the rightful lords” of the land. For however “Gothic” the present movement of white men is, their acquisition of the land “is inevitable, fatal; we must not complain, but look forward to a good result” (29).

Fuller arrives in the West with “the traditional idea that America was destined to serve as a testing site for the world’s moral advancement” (Sorasio 158), and however disillusioning the reality of the settlement is, she steadfastly adheres to the belief that her country is “surely destined to elucidate a great moral law”—the faith expressed both before and after her travel respectively in “The Great Lawsuit” (8) and *Woman in the*

Nineteenth Century (13) with no change to the words. Whenever her own insight into the morally questionable nature of American colonial practice threatens to shake this faith, Fuller acquiesces to what she could only construe as inevitable. Just one paragraph after almost conceding that white men proved themselves to be “Goth”-like interlopers into a land not their own, Fuller justifies their seizure on the level of “symbol”: “Still, in travelling through this country, I could not but be struck with the force of a symbol. Wherever the hog comes, the rattlesnake disappears; the omnivorous traveler, safe in its stupidity, willingly and easily makes a meal of the most dangerous of reptiles, and one whom the Indian looks on with a mystic awe. Even so the white settler pursues the Indian, and is victor in the chase” (29). As different as two distinct species of the “hog” and the “rattlesnake,” the white man and the Indian cannot coexist, the former instinctually designed to “pursu[e]” the latter “in the chase”; the unnatural intrusion of white settlers into American nature is somehow justified by nature itself. As Fuller believes that American nature has in store an irresistible destiny of a great empire, nature takes the conceptual place of the divine plan for the New World in *Summer*, and it works just like Providence, transcending human logic and intellect. As nature does not function logically, an empire governed by nature’s law works in a contradictory manner too. As such, the trope of nature provides a justification for Fuller’s inconsistent and incompatible claims.

Fuller evokes the recurring American theme of nature in order to explain how unnatural the westward expansion is. One lives right when he or she lives according to

nature's norms and dictates. Similarly, an empire develops rightly when it grows according to nature's norm and dictates. For the march of the American civilization to become truly civilizing, it should become natural first. But the "rude foreigners" (65), being interested only in material gains and lacking the ability to "understand the best interests of the land" (65), are preventing the American empire from growing "naturally":

I come to the west prepared for the distaste I must experience at its mushroom growth. I know that where "go ahead" is the only motto, the village cannot grow into the gentle proportions that successive lives, and the gradations of experience involuntarily give. In older countries the house of the son grew from that of the father, as naturally as new joints on a bough. And the cathedral crowned the whole as naturally as the leafy summit the tree. This cannot be here. The march of peaceful [sic] is scarce less wanton than that of warlike invasion. The old landmarks are broken down, and the land, for a season, bears none, except of the rudeness of conquest and the needs of the day, whose bivouac fires blacken the sweetest forest glades. I have come prepared to see all this, to dislike it, but not with stupid narrowness to distrust or defame. (18)

Rather than building civilization, white settlers fill the land with "the rudeness of conquest," destroying its natural beauty; rude and uncultured, they "blacken the sweetest forest glades." As white men "blacken" the place, the white logic that equates

light and civilization with whiteness, darkness and savagery with non-whiteness does not seem to work—at least for now. What is indicated here is a profound cultural shift occurred by the political revision of whiteness. With the massive influx of European immigrants began in the 1840s, “whiteness was no longer [regarded as] a guarantee of civilization at all” (Jacobson 168). Whereas the monolithic concept of whiteness as the marker of civilization that distinguishes white men from non-civilized racial others prevailed before the 1840s, a “new paradigm of plural white races” or “a new perception of some Europeans’ *unfitness* for self-government” began to emerge during the decade (Jacobson 42). Written when whiteness became a contested site, the drive to restore the racial logic of whiteness impels the plot of *Summer*. The shallow and vulgar settlers who darken the land should be enlightened to become civilizers. The foreigner should “grow better” so that he can become the “father,” building a home from which the “house” of his “son” can grow “as naturally as new joints on a bough” as in “older countries.” The natural growth of the nation seems to depend upon the natural growth of the family.

Having “no thought beyond satisfying the grossest material wants” and incapable of “intelligent appreciation of the spirit of the scene” (29), white settlers should grow better to “become true lords of the soil” (77). As if evoking the famous slogan, “Go West, young man, and grow up with the country,” Fuller renders the West as the place where the thoughtless “mob” can grow up into “men”:

But let him come sufficiently armed with patience to learn the new spells
which the new dragons require, (and this can only be done on the spot,)
he will not finally be disappointed of the promised treasure; the mob will
resolve itself into men, yet crude, but of good dispositions, and capable of
good character; the solitude will become sufficiently enlivened and home
grow up at last from the rich sod. (75)

Only after learning new languages (“the new spells”) of the American nature, that is, only after becoming at “home” with the spirit of the land, a “home” for them would grow from the soil. Civilizing American land starts with the formation of the vulgar “mob” into civilized subjectivities and ends with the cultivation of “home”—a process that requires white women’s contribution while giving no place to Native Americans.

Like many white male writers of her time, Fuller sees the frontier as the place where a new form of manhood is produced. Unlike her male contemporaries, however, she does not see American masculinity as needing to escape the emasculating force of femininity through wilderness. Far from embracing the idea of nature as liberating a manhood “beset” by constricting feminine forces, Fuller engages in the cultural work of writing the West as the place for revitalized masculinity to argue *for* the expanded role of white women, recasting the frontier through the terms of the discourse of female influence.²⁷ Fuller sees that America’s imperial destiny can be realized only when

²⁷ I intentionally use the word, “beset,” to compare Fuller’s representation of the west with the male representation of the place that Baym so insightfully analyzes in her

American men—and she literally means the *men* “who were to be the fathers of a new race” (12) —are essentially reformed so that they can beget a new empire led by “a new race.” For the West to become a place for such transformation, it first needs to be the place where one can reconnect with the much repressed moral source: feminine nature. In a move that anticipates eco-feminist insights, Fuller suggests that the same ideology shapes the male mistreatment of both nature and women and urges an end to the oppression of both. American nature itself “afford[s] so fair a chance of happiness” (37), but white men, not knowing how to treat it other than as the exploitable object for mastery and conquest, fail to learn “the mighty meaning of the scene” (18). Like American nature that “breathes [and] speaks in vain to those who are rushing into its sphere” (29), the feminine “nature” of America’s women is exploited by her men who are not willing to let her deeper meaning freely express itself. For Fuller, America has become like an undeserving husband who enjoyed feeling “the glow and fragrance of her [his wife’s] *nature*, but cared not to explore the little secret paths whence that fragrance was collected” (my emphasis 59).

The archetypal female resonance of nature gets to take on a national meaning as Fuller relies on the metaphorical relation between femininity and nature to present white femininity as important as nature, the indispensable source of national pride and identity for America. *Summer* uses more than one genre to conceptualize feminine nature as a

famous essay, “Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors.”

long suppressed moral source and inspiration for the nation's spiritual expansion²⁸. One of the long digressions included in *Summer* is the story of Mariana, "an old schoolmate" (51) of Fuller, but in fact a very thinly veiled autobiographical representation of the author herself. Mariana's story is about a failed marriage that ended in a suicide of an unhappy wife. After experiencing the Edenic nature of Illinois, Fuller meets Mrs. Z., Mariana's aunt who tells her that "Mariana, so full of life, was dead" (51). A "provoking nonconformist," Mariana is "misunderstood" by her classmates except for Fuller who "was determined [that] until her lover appeared, I myself would be the wise and delicate being who would understand her" (55). Fuller's "shining favorite" (56) "had shed her animation through [her companions'] lives" (54), but fell in love with a man not compatible with her either in terms of intellect or sentiment (59). Sylvain, Mariana's husband, "seemed, at first, to take her to himself as the deep southern night might some fair star. But it proved not so" (58-9). "[A] fine sample of womanhood, born to shed light and life on some palace home" (61), Mariana's inner light is wasted in an ill-matched marriage.

Typical of Fuller, Mariana's story is never just an isolated instance but is about "the appointed lot of woman" in general (64). She becomes a symbol that represents both the unrecognized and disrespected feminine nature *and* the nature of the nation. What Katherine Adams calls "Fuller's own repeating motif of nationhood uprooted

²⁸ The text's generic hybridity combining "travelogue, autobiography, social criticism, sketchbook, and journal" (Smith vii) has been pointed out a lot. See Susan Belasco Smith's "Introduction" to *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843* (1991).

from nature's law" (46) expresses itself in the Mariana's story about how heterosexual union fails when masculinity is kept out of touch with feminine nature. Fuller laments that "such women as Mariana are often lost, unless they meet some man of sufficiently great soul to prize them" (64), and quickly slides from this lamentation to the lament for the nation that has not met a "man of sufficiently great soul to prize" the greatness of her, connecting these two somewhat disparate trains of thought to metaphorically link feminine nature to the nation itself:

When will this country have such a man? It is what she needs; no thin Idealist, no coarse Realist, but a man whose eye reads the heavens while his feet step firmly on the ground, and his hands are strong and dexterous for the use of human implements. A man religious, virtuous and—sagacious; a man of universal sympathies, but self-possessed; a man who knows the region of emotion, though he is not its slave; a man to whom this world is no mere spectacle, or fleeting shadow, but a great solemn game to be played with good heed, for its stakes are of eternal value, yet who, if his own play be true, heeds not what he loses by the falsehood of others. A man who hives from the past, yet knows that its honey can but moderately avail him; whose comprehensive eye scans the present, neither infatuated by its golden lures, nor chilled by its many ventures; who possesses prescience, as the wise man must, but not so far as to be driven mad to-day by the gift which discerns to-morrow. When there is such a man for America, the thought which urges her on will be expressed. (64)

The “thought which urges” America on, of course, refers to the Declaration. The “great moral law” that the nation is supposed to elucidate is being put down because there is no such “man for America” who is religious enough to “rea[d] the heavens,” sympathetic enough to “kno[w] the region of emotion,” and finally who has broad enough vision to learn from the past and predict tomorrow while comprehensively “scan[ning] the present.” In short, he is a wise man of divine sensibility and feeling with a power to conquer time as opposed to land, and all this capacity is equated with being able to truly understand a female soul. Fuller’s moral equation affirms heteronormativity while taking race out of itself; if America is destined to become a great moral example to the world, it would emerge as such through a new model of subject capable of just treatment of the other sex but not necessarily Native Americans.

The founding words of the nation elucidate lofty ideals, but the way Americans took “the seat of [the Indian’s] former home” (72) does not correspond to such ideals. That the American west is stained by Indian blood and “contained for the exile the bones of his dead, the ashes of his hopes” (72) is the uncomfortable and uneasy knowledge Fuller can never shake off. And this ability to feel guilt is what separates Fuller from other settlers who express “the aversion that the white man soon learns to feel for the Indian on whom he encroaches, the aversion of the injurer for him he has degraded.” To Fuller, how one *reacts* to the plight of the doomed Indian —as opposed to *act*—is the real measure of the person’s moral decency. Fuller is troubled more by the settler’s incapacity to feel the right feeling towards the Indian than by his action. The Indian

condition should “awake[n] soft compassion—almost remorse—in the present owner of that fair hill” (72), but by failing to display such feeling, white settlers also show their barbarity. The moral imperative for white men is largely an intimate matter, a question of the individual’s sensitivity compelling that person to *feel*—rather than act—right. Despite Fuller’s sympathetic portrayals of Native Americans and her effort to poetically understand the Indian spirit—“the Indian cannot be looked at truly except by a poetic eye” (20)—she engages in the unequal power relations perpetuated by sentimental discourse, which according to Wexler, reduces the subjugated races to “the human scenery before which the melodrama of middleclass redemption could be enacted, for the enlightenment of an audience that was not even themselves” (15). That is, Fuller’s writing about the Indians is not written for or *to* the Indians, but to enlighten the white audience. One major concern for Fuller is to enlighten the white audience so that they could be better colonizers. With nothing left to do to save the Indians from their tragic fate, she wishes to “save *us* from sinning still more deeply” (my emphasis 144). In Fuller’s logic, one’s reaction to the plight of the Indian is an indication of that person’s moral decency which manifests itself in “their *private* dealings with the subjugated race” (my emphasis 144). *Summer* follows a sentimental logic that casts the political as private and encourages readers to feel political responsibility in the sphere of “private” relations—a similar logic that structures *Hobomok*. Where sentimentalism builds the fantasy of willing submission of the native inhabitants in Child’s text, Fuller uses sentimentality to construct white racial identity. She wants “the white” to prove to “be really the superior in enlargement of thought” by “look[ing] on him [the Indian] in pity

and brotherly goodwill, and do all he can to mitigate the doom of those who survive his past injuries” (144).

The failure to feel human feeling of “pity and brotherly goodwill” towards those they injure constitutes the failure of white civilization itself:

I know that the Europeans who took possession of this country, felt themselves justified by their superior civilization and religious ideas. Had they been truly civilized or Christianized, the conflicts which sprang from the collision of the two races, might have been avoided; but this cannot be expected in movements made by masses of men. The mass has never yet been humanized, though the age may develop a human thought. (143)

Assuming the role of a moral instructor who can “develop a human thought” for the “masses” that need to be “humanized,” Fuller suggests that the problem of white civilization is that it failed to “truly civiliz[e] and Christianiz[e]” the unthinking and unfeeling white settlers. “Whether the Indian could, by any efforts of love and intelligence from the white man, have been civilized and made a valuable ingredient in the new state, I will not say,” thus observes Fuller (113). After all, she has “no hope of . . . saving the Indian from immediate degradation and speedy death” (121). The white men would remain however, and they are the ones that white civilization should civilize. For “the white man, as yet, is a halftamed pirate, and avails himself as much as ever, of the maxim, ‘Might makes right’” (121).

Pervading Fuller's travel narrative is a moral question as to how to redeem America's not-so-moral imperial progress—a question framed in sentimental terms. Laura Mielke highlights that Fuller “reclaim[s] and revis[es] the affective language used to portray Indian-white encounters” to “emphasiz[e] her sympathetic response to the spectacle of oppression” (96). But even when *Summer* strives to capture the genuine feeling of interracial sympathy more than the sentimental vocabulary allows, it ultimately works toward the reification of the consciousness of the imperial subject through *that* discourse. She agrees with critics of Indian removal that “[o]ur people and our government have sinned alike against the first-born of the soil, and if they are the fated agents of a new era, they have done nothing—have invoked no god to keep them sinless *while they do the hest of fate*” (my emphasis 114). What's worse is that “when they [white settlers] invoke the holy power,” it is “only to mask their iniquity” (114). But even when she condemns the moral corruption of her country, and expresses a feeling of uncertainty as to “if” white men are really destined to lead “a new era” of the nation, she immediately justifies the colonial violence by adding that they were doing “the hest of fate,” all in one sentence. The “sin” seems to be almost divinely predicted as she quotes from the Bible: “Needs be that offenses must come, yet woe them by whom they come” (121). Fuller's sympathetic treatment of the Indian led Jeffrey Steele to claim that “[a]s a woman, she is encouraged to identify with the victims of power not with powerful agency” (“Introduction” xxiv), but the negotiation and interrogation of her position within sentimental and colonial discourse is much more complicated than he suggests. The very role she assumes as a travel writer of the West would have been

impossible without the cultural privilege and agency she possesses as a white woman. The “human feeling” she feels toward the other race, moreover, constitutes the proof of her moral superiority vis-à-vis the unfeeling white working class, enabling her to construct her authorial identity as a moral instructor for the unthinking public.

It is no paradox, therefore, that Fuller is both anti-imperialist and imperialist, progressive when it comes to urging the readers to feel guilty of colonial sins, deeply conventional when it comes to relieving the white Americans of the political responsibility. She wants to alleviate wrongs but never fully believes that the Indian could ever be integrated into the white society. For her, civilization is fundamentally white and “the only true and profound means of civilization” for Native Americans is racial mixing, but “nature seems, like all else, to declare, that this race is fated to perish. Those of mixed blood fade early, and are not generally a fine race,” often combining only the bad qualities of them both—“the rapaciousness and cunning of the white, with the narrowness and ferocity of the savage” (120, 136). Again, “nature” is cited as the guiding force behind the inexorable fate of the race. The “only true” way to civilization for the Indian is blocked by nature. For Fuller, the ideal human being is the one who combines “the sentiment and thoughtfulness of the one [the white], with the boldness, personal resource, and fortitude of the other [the Indian]” (136), but, like most of her contemporary white Americans, she is simply incapable of imagining an interracial society leading to the formation of such identity.

Some elements of *Summer* make the text look like a critique of capitalist

expansion that distorts “a vision of a just society rooted in nature” and “the cold social calculus of immediate profit” that stops white settlers from exploring “the human potential to live up to the beauty of picturesque landscape” (Newman). As a Transcendentalist, Fuller does suggest that humanity should be restored to its original purity through an ideal perception of Nature, but nature for her is a word that signifies diverse and even inconsistent meanings—meanings that make sense only in an imperial style of thought. The trope of nature serves Fuller as the site through which she can express ambiguous, contradictory, and conflicting ideas on the questions concerning the ontological status of white domination of non-white land without really answering them. If America is to become a just society only when its citizens live up to the beauty of its nature, why can’t the Indian be part of it? Again, nature compels the racial destiny. The Indians’ close relation to nature work against them as they would disappear from the land *in consequence of* their closeness to it:

A traveller observes, that the white settlers, who live in the woods, soon become sallow, lanky, and dejected; the atmosphere of the trees does not agree with Caucasian lungs; and it is, perhaps, in part, an instinct of this, which causes the hatred of the new settlers towards trees. The Indian breathed the atmosphere of the forests freely; he loved their shade. As they are effaced from the land, he fleets [sic] too; a part of the same manifestation, which cannot linger behind its proper era. (120-1)

Naturally belonging to the “atmosphere of the trees” of the land that “does not agree

with Caucasian lungs,” the Indian cannot coexist with the “civilized man” who might be “a more imperfect nature than the savage,” but is “a larger mind” (136), and who lives on the cultivation of land as opposed to under the “shade” of “trees.” Fuller *naturalizes* the violence of Indian removal as it is conceived as a non-violent phenomenon, “a part of the same manifestation” as the effacement of forests. The Indian is figured as a passing phase that “cannot linger behind its proper era,” a stage in human history that would be naturally displaced by the next one. Their disappearance is the phenomenon not only of nature but temporality too. Hence no need to “grieve that all the noble trees are gone” for the civilized race that “presages and demands a higher sphere” will “reproduce them in the form of new intellectual growths” (135, 18).

To “reproduce” civilization is something that cannot be achieved without white women whose “interest and . . . light for the education of the children” (65) is vital for the future of the nation. Scholars attuned to Fuller’s exploration of “oppression” in *Summer on the Lakes* tend to suggest how Fuller’s feminist thoughts are enriched by her contact with Native Americans, often ignoring the deep imperialist undercurrent of the text²⁹. Christina Zwarg, for example, suggests that Fuller seeks to articulate a liberatory

²⁹ Fuller completed “The Great Lawsuit,” in May 1843, almost right before leaving for the Great Lakes and Wisconsin Territory. A year later, she published *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*, and revised and expanded “The Great Lawsuit” into *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Due to this chronological proximity of the three texts, discussions of the impact of Fuller’s experience of the frontier on the development of her feminism abound. Charlene Avallone, for example, suggests that Fuller’s contact with Indians constitutes the “red roots” of her feminism as she borrows “a complex, androgynous model of gender that is woman-centered,” a new model of gender emerging from

politics both for women and Native Americans by “pursu[ing] two intertwined narrative ambitions in *Summer on the Lakes*: a change in the attitude toward Native Americans and a change in the attitude toward women in general” (104). *Summer*, of course, offers some powerful moments of “the Indian-white moving encounter” that might serve to correct white misconceptions of the other race (Mielke 94), but Fuller’s commitment to the oppressed race is contradicted by the logic of empire she sets out to elaborate. It is true to some extent that Fuller “challenges the ideologies that made the land, women, and racial minorities exploitable commodities” through her “reactions to imperialistic, sexist, and racist attitudes” (Steele, “Introduction” xxiii). But what she objects to is the unjust exercise of power and *not* the power itself as she holds firm to the belief that her nation should be a benevolent empire that exerts power justly, never committing “sexist” and “racist” crime.

Native Americans might be the “rightful” owner of their native land, but they are powerless in the face of civilization. White men have “might,” but they do not know how to live naturally. White women, however, can balance nature and culture. The West

Woman from the indigenous culture (138). Annette Kolodny argues that *Summer* is “informed . . . by the concerns for women that Fuller had so recently explored in ‘The Great Lawsuit’” while *Woman* is “informed by the new insights (and frustrated fantasies) awakened on the prairies but only imperfectly analyzed” in *Summer* (*Land before Her*, 128-129). Lucy Maddox also explains that “many of the anecdotes she first records” in *Summer* “are repeated—having become examples used to support Fuller’s argument for female equality” in *Woman* (132). According to Susan J. Rosowski, Fuller “anticipates the serious argument” of *Woman* in *Summer* by “turning toward the future with hope for other, younger women” (131)

supplies the real ground for actualizing the cultural script that combines culture and nature through white femininity. As their “female taste . . . veil[s] every rudeness” and “avail[s] itself of every sylvan grace” (36), Euro-American women would create a new form of domesticity organic to the American soil, creating harmony between natural beauty and refined culture. Both as the purveyors of culture who refine “every rudeness” and the conveyors of the beauty of nature who bring “sylvan grace” to their home, white women are fitted for the colonial task of cultivating American land without destroying its natural beauty. The success of American empire is contingent on the expansion of white women’s roles—a point she further elaborates in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Fuller’s critique of American imperialism is more correctly a critique of the empire’s failure to acknowledge white femininity as its moral source, and in this sense, *Summer* is more a case for white women’s imperial capacity than a case against the imperial expansion. The “western woman” promises a counterweight to the material tendency of “the mass” because “she alone has leisure” to educate “the children of the present settlers [to] be leaven enough for the mass constantly increasing by emigration” (65).

As the only place that has “no banks of established respectability in which to bury the talent” and where “[t]he only superiority—that of superior knowledge—was sufficient to maintain authority,” the West presents white women with the promise to demonstrate their “superiority” with no censure (103). As it is suggested in an episode about a school in a settlement that displayed a “very pleasant” learning relationship

between teachers and students despite the fact that the classes were “conducted by two girls of nineteen and seventeen years” for the “pupils . . . nearly as old as themselves” (103), the West could offer a new model of more equal community by letting women put their talent to public use. A scene from the school also suggests how white women’s active social role could also lead to a peaceful colonial relation:

To the windows of this house, where the daughter of a famous “Indian fighter,” i.e. fighter against the Indians, was learning French and the piano, came wild, tawny figures, offering for sale their baskets of berries. The boys now, instead of brandishing the tomahawk, tame their hands to pick raspberries.

Where a daughter of a “fighter against the Indians” stops fighting and starts learning, “tawny” Indian boys are *tamed* too. Male aggression would never stop young Natives from “brandishing the tomahawk,” but white women would feminize and domesticate the wild “hands to pick raspberries.” Even when Fuller seemingly offers a desirable model of interracial relation, however, she does so to demonstrate white women’s pacifying force rather than really arguing for sustainable interracial coexistence.

If Fuller writes “her own version of America as the New World . . . , a New Eden . . . in which Eve would have her chance” and envisions the West as *the* place where women could become the “creators of a nation” (Rosowski 138, 141), this “engendered” representation of the West requires the removal of the Indian. For how else can one imagine the land as the empty, “rich sod” from which the white man’s

“home [will] grow up” (75)? Fuller has to repress her own uneasy awareness of colonial reality that displaces the original owner of the land from “his former home” (72) in order to imagine the Indian land as the unoccupied ground for planting a home. The botanic metaphor of a white “home grow[ing] up . . . from the rich sod” makes white domesticity emblematic of the nation’s cultivation and the natural resources to be acquired from the American soil. As such, it helps Fuller’s reader imagine the act of *supplanting* the Native Peoples’ home as *planting* a new form of home.

Charlene Avallone argues that Fuller “grounds her feminist theory” on the “Native gynocentric traditions” and that through her “openness to cross-cultural influence” she argues for “redistribution of value and power across racial, class and age differences” (135, 136). Susan Gilmore makes a similar claim that Fuller sees in the West “a proving ground for a new breed of American woman more vital and organic to American soil. And she takes as her ideal a truly “native” type: ‘the Indian girl.’” (192). While these readings present an important side of Fuller’s work, they reproduce a pre-established vision of Margaret Fuller as “a writer always keen to dislodge—and to be dislodged from—the securities of the status quo” (Taylor 98), and they tend to ignore the deep imperialist current in the text. Fuller might find a symbolic model for the renewal of white femininity from Native folklore, but she firmly believes that “their [Indian women’s] place is certainly lower, and their share of the human inheritance less” than “their white sisters” (111). Her travel account affirms the common characterization of Native women as drudges as a fact: “Notwithstanding the homage paid to women,

and the consequence allowed her in some cases, it is impossible to look upon the Indian women, without feeling that they *do* occupy a lower place than women among the nations of European civilization. The habits of drudgery [are] expressed in their form and gesture” (111). There might be a feminine heritage that pays homage to women recorded in the writings about the Indian culture, but Indian women themselves “inherit submission, and the minds of the generality accommodate themselves more or less to any posture” (111). As white women do not inherit the submission innate to the Indian woman, they seem to be the better heiress to the Indian tradition that displays “admiration at the courage and calmness” of women. After all, white women “have more aspiration and refinement” (111).

Fuller’s approach to the West as a place for feminist renewal requires an ideological work of naturalizing the dispossession of the Native American from their own land and tradition. As she never questions the “inevitable” demise of the Indian, she urges her white readers to “reproduce” the Indianness through white cultural products: “Yet, ere they depart, I wish there might be some masterly attempt to reproduce, in art or literature, what is proper to them, a kind of beauty and grandeur, which few of the every-day crowd have hearts to feel, yet which ought to leave in the world its monuments, to inspire the thought of genius through all ages” (121). Whereas the integration of the Indian into white society is rejected on the grounds of “nature,” converting the Indian spirit into the “beauty and grandeur” of the aesthetics of White America is an urgent task before the citizens who unlike “the every-day crowd” have

“hearts to feel.” If the “beauty and dignity” of the Indian is to be looked at “by a poetic eye” (20), Fuller characterizes her own work in terms of producing a “poetic impression of the country at large” that she “got from the journey.” The poetic feeling that she wants to convey to the readers is decisively imperialist; it is a feeling that “the power of fate is with the white man” (71).

Fuller doesn’t just get a poetic impression from her travel; she also brings one *to* it. Towards the end of her travelogue, she inserts her own poem titled “Governor Everett Receiving the Indian Chiefs, November 1837” written prior to the journey but never published before. Her sojourn in the West makes her feel that there is no “reason to change the sentiments expressed in the . . . lines” of the poem (114). Topically, the poem is about the event the title refers to, but it reads as an apologia for Indian Removal. In an apparently sympathetic tone, the speaker sentimentally asks about the delegation of Sac and Fox tribes walking through Boston for the speech of Governor Edward Everett:

. . . That dark, stately band,
Whose ancestors enjoyed all this fair land
Whence they, by force or fraud, were made to flee,
Are brought, the white man’s victory to see.
Can kind emotions in their proud hearts glow,
As through these realms, now decked by Art, they go?
The church, the school, the railroad and the mart—

Can these a pleasure to their minds impart?

All once was theirs—earth, ocean, forest, sky—

How can they joy in what now meets the eye? (116)

“[S]o strange and sad their lot,” the Indians might still hold on to hope and “look up in trust to the clear heaven” if they were in the wilderness (116, 117). But the marvels of white civilization—“dock, railroad, and canal, / Fort, market, bridge, college, and arsenal, / Asylum, hospital, and cotton mill, / The theatre, the lighthouse, and the jail” (116)—rising from the (burial) ground “Where Massasoit sleeps—where Philip fell!” would make even proud Indian chiefs accept their fate (117). At least the speaker does:

We take our turn, and the Philosopher

Sees through the clouds a hand which cannot err,

An unimproving race, with all their graces

And all their vices, must resign their places;

And Human Culture rolls its onward flood

Over the broad plains steeped in Indian blood. (117)

The question of colonizers’ responsibility for the suffering of those whom they have colonized shifts into a question of “the Philosopher” about the invisible “hand which cannot err” in presiding over history. Fuller participates in the ideological work of fusing secular history with sacred history, giving westward expansion the grandeur of Providence. Her treatment of American imperial progress as an exegetic event performs

what Sacvan Bercovitch calls “the rituals of God’s country” (“The Rites of Assent” 6), a ritual grounded in the Puritan rhetoric of wilderness. Like the Puritans who saw in the “wilderness . . . their mirror of prophecy” (“The Rites of Assent” 10), Fuller envisions how “Human Culture rolls its onward flood” over the land “steeped in Indian blood” and predicts that the Indians are destined to “resign their places” for they are “unimproving.”

Fuller goes to the West with the belief that “God *and Time* are just” (my emphasis 115) and comes back with it. Not just God but time too is on white men’s side—the race intent on and capable of progress. The colonial contest over land becomes the contest over the inexorable tide of time and progress, a battle that an “unimproving race” has not even a slim chance to win. Even an Indian orator Fuller meets at Mackinaw sees “the superiority on the side of the white man” who, unlike an Indian, has capacity for foresight: “‘This,’ said he, ‘is the difference between the white and the red man; the white man looks to the future and paves the way for posterity.’ This is a statement uncommonly refined for an Indian; but one of the gentlemen present, who understood the Chippeway, vouched for it as a literal rendering of his phrases; and he did indeed touch the vital point of difference” (123). The different attitudes towards temporality constitute a fundamental racial difference for Fuller. Lest the readers forget “the vital point of difference” made by the Indian, Fuller reminds them of the Indian orator’s point again in her concluding pages:

I have mentioned that the Indian orator, who addressed the agents on this

occasion, said, the difference between the white man and the red man is this: “the white man no sooner came here, than he thought of preparing the way for his posterity; the red man never thought of this.” I was assured this was exactly his phrase; and it defines the true difference. We get the better because we do

“Look before and after.” (154)

White men “get the better” because of their efforts to work for a better future. The Indian might be in America but not *of* America. Fuller conflates racial difference and temporal scope on the continuum of progress in human history repeating the nationalist and imperialist idea of America as the “great nation of futurity” to borrow the expression from the title of John L. O’Sullivan’s 1839 essay. Aesthetically and spiritually, the Indian might be the “rightful” owners of the land, but “the hapless owners of the soil” (113) do not belong to the American future. Despite their “greatness of the past,” the Indian has “the scanty promise of the future” for their lack of ability to exercise foresight (142). They inhabit an archaic time within the *New World*.³⁰

³⁰ Even the physique of the “men of these subjugated tribes, now accustomed to drunkenness and every way degraded, bear but a faint impress of the lost grandeur of the race” as if the decayed remnant from the great past. Fuller continues: “They are no longer strong, tall, or finely proportioned. Yet as you see them stealing along a height, or striding boldly forward, they remind you of what *was* majestic in the red man” (my emphasis 113)

Fuller renders the Indian almost extinct in treating them as the object of nostalgia: “I feel acquainted with the soul of this race; I read its nobler thought in their defaced figures. There *was* a greatness, unique and precious, which he who does not feel will never duly appreciate the majesty of nature in this American continent” (my emphasis 153). The question of the future of the “defaced” race is put into the past tense, in terms of “a greatness” that there “was.” The “unique and precious” “soul” of the Native people commands artistic respect, and the nation should produce literary works “made in a sympathizing spirit” that would “give the ages a glimpse at what was great in Indian life and Indian character” (142). Euro-Americans are in need of such works that would raise affectionate recognition of Indian greatness. Without such capacity to “feel” the greatness of the original inhabitants of the land, one would never be able to “duly appreciate the majesty of nature” of the land itself. The Indian becomes the object to remember and the spiritual force to be summoned up from the natural objects of “this American continent” *by white Americans*—the race that can “[l]ook before and after” (154). The white man’s power over time obliges him to record and reproduce the Indianness through art and literature for “the Indian . . . cannot make use of his intelligence. The fate of his people is against it” (123). But white men are fated to own the continent not because of their ability to conquer the land but because of their power to be in control of temporality. By defining Euro-Americans as the race conquering time rather than the land, Fuller participates in “a nationalist rhetoric that produces the United States as a republic whose real territory is more temporal than spatial” (Allen

18).

Thomas M. Allen explains how temporality emerged as an imperial concept during the nineteenth century as various writers “imagined America as an empire extending through time rather than across space” (13). By imagining their nation “[a]s an empire of time rather than space, the creators of such narratives hoped, America would both dominate world history, determining the fates of other nations, and avoid the unjust exercise of power that republican political theory abhorred” (13). Fuller is not one of the “many significant American national theorists” Allen studies, but the language of temporality developed in *Summer* and *Woman* would qualify her as one of those writers who “sought to escape the political paradoxes of space by conquering time” (Allen 13). Fuller puts aside her guilt and uneasiness at the distressing spectacles of westward expansion by appealing to the future and trying to “trust by reverent faith to woo the mighty meaning of the scene, perhaps to foresee the law by which a new order, a new poetry is to be evoked from this chaos” (18)³¹. She evades the question of the present by reinforcing the peculiarly American tendency to build national narratives around the national future rather than the past—a peculiarity observed by de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. Where the creators of national literatures elsewhere were intent on narrating the national past, Americans “scarcely concern

³¹ One wonders if Fuller is echoing Thomas Cole’s “Essay on American Scenery” (1835) where he invites readers to imagine that “in looking over the yet uncultivated scene, the mind’s eye may see far into the futurity. Where the wolf roams, the plough shall glisten; on the gray crag shall rise temple and tower—mighty deeds shall be done in the now pathless wilderness; and poets yet unborn shall sanctify the soil” (36)

themselves with the past but readily dream of the future; in this direction, their unbound imaginations spread and grow without limits” (de Tocqueville 562)³². In O’Sullivan’s words, “our national birth . . . separates us from the past and connects us with the future only,” making the “expansive future . . . our arena, and for our history” (“The Great Nation of Futurity”). *Summer* participates in the cultural work of giving a distinctively national and imperial shape to the idea of the future by racializing it. The manifest destiny of the rising republic precludes the superannuated race and bestows the future only on the race ready for it. Fuller reproduces and recontextualizes the colonial logic that converts the social and geographical differences of the colonized into temporal differences—an outmoded condition from the white civilization. If for many nineteenth-century American writers, “to produce versions of temporality” was “to found particular accounts of American nationhood” (Allen 3), for Fuller it was also to produce racial accounts of the white people as those in the vanguard of progress and the Native people as the obsolete race.

White Americans as the Pioneers of the Future

If Americans produced their national identity through the “narratives that emphasized expansion through time and the power to shape the future” (Allen 29),

³² Tocqueville continues: “This offers broad vistas to poets who have the chance of painting distant scenes. Democracy, which shuts the past against the poet, opens the future before him” (562). It is also noteworthy that Fuller much admired *Democracy in America*. See Charles Capper’s biography, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life Volume II: The Public Years*, 87.

Summer shows that such a process of nation building through temporal narratives was irrevocably tied to race building, an inherently exclusionary practice. The temporal narratives of America as the empire of the future operate in such a way that casts the repressed races as incapable of progress, giving no place to them. In *Summer* Fuller deals with colonial guilt through temporality; “the first born of the soil” belongs in the national past whereas the future belongs to white Americans, “the fated agents of a new era” (114). Any attempt to make one’s own history depends on being able to prepare for temporal vicissitudes, an ability, according to Fuller, not possessed by the Indian. By restricting the capacity to be in control of time to the white race, Fuller could argue that white Americans, despite their moral failings, shall lead American history.

Reaffirmed and reproduced in *Summer* is the nationalist and imperialist sentiment that white Americans are the pioneers of the future, not just the land. A sense similar to the thought expressed in Cooper’s *Notions of Americans* (1828) underwrites Fuller’s definition of national identity. Cooper sees America as the place where previously unrelated “men of all nations” get to live in the same “excitement of a rapid and constantly progressive condition,” creating a shared sense of a new communal identity of “we” and a national identity defined by “an onward impulse”: “we advance because we are not accustomed to stand still” (qtd. in Dekker 82). The (false) national pride that Americans take in their ability to propel themselves forward in time is aptly captured in White-Jacket’s famous utterance that “God has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans. . . . The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers . . . , the advance-guard, sent on through the

wilderness . . . to break a new path in the New World that is ours” (Melville 506). Clothing imperial aggression as the progressive zeal to move forward, these statements assume that the temporal dimension of “a new path” is to be opened by men. For both Cooper and Melville, the “we” of national agency is male, and there seems to be nothing striking about such gendering. In most national narratives the forward-thrusting agency of national progress is gendered male while women are figured as the “conservative repository of the national archaic” (McClintock 359)³³. But there is a peculiarly American tendency *counter* to such conceptions of women as the embodiment of the national past, namely, the notion of white American women as the embodiment of the *future*—a tradition of which Fuller herself is an important writer.

If America as the *New World* embodies the future at large, the promises of the future are to be sought and secured by women of the land. In *Woman* Fuller would extend her claim that the New World is the best place for a new type of woman to emerge. For America, more than anywhere else in the world, is ready to “[g]ive the soul free course” to its women (*W* 56). With “no traditions [to] chain them” and free from

³³ This is a tendency that also continues today. Women in many countries are left with the duty to preserve national culture. Uma Narayan shows how “cultural essentialism” in Third World countries works in a way that binds women to the national past and old “norms and practices” by representing such oppressive tools as “the task of ‘resisting westernization’ and ‘preserving national culture’” (“Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism” 85). See Narayan’s essay on a similar topic, “Contesting Cultures: ‘Westernization,’ Respect for Cultures, and Third World Feminists” from *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminisms* (1997).

“the habits of the past,” American women are better suited to pioneer “a heavenly future” than women from the Old World:

But they have time to think, and no traditions chain them, and few conventionalities, compared with what must be met in other nations. There is no reason why they should not discover that the secrets of nature are open, the revelations of the spirit waiting, for whoever will seek them. When the mind is once awakened to this consciousness, it will not be restrained by the habits of the past, but fly to seek the seeds of a heavenly future. (W 65)

Invoking the ideology of the separate sphere in such a way that reverses the notion of women as the socializing forces preventing men from forging his own destiny and creating his own future, Fuller argues that “[i]n our own country, women are, in many respects, better situated than men” (W 64). Whereas men’s “low materialist tendency” is reinforced through their participation in the market economy, women’s exclusion from the economic system confers the privilege that “the sliding and backsliding men of the world” do not have: the time and space to seek “truth and good . . . solely for their own sakes” (W 65, 92, 65). As a man’s “habits and his will [are] corrupted by the past” and male “minds are so encumbered by tradition,” “it needs for woman to show herself in her native dignity, to teach them” and to introduce them “to the contemplation of the heavens” (W 100, 101, 76). Against male backwardness, “women like Sand will speak

now and cannot be silenced; their characters and their eloquence alike foretell an era when such as they shall easier learn to lead true lives” (W 45).

Gendering American Revolution and Its Imperial Ascension through Gendering Temporality in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*

Upon the racialized conception of temporality Fuller sets out to build her feminist argument in *Woman*. When “Americans set out to colonize time in the nineteenth century” (Allen 59), *Woman* suggests that empowering women would aid the nation in conquering time. Filling her feminist treatise is a sense of imminence that “a new manifestation is at hand” and “a new hour in the day of man” (10) is going to manifest itself in the nineteenth century America through its women. Again and again, Fuller refers to the “signs of time” (20, 55); “symptoms of the times” (17); “a sign of a new era” (46); “the throng of symptoms which denote” (72) “the new order” (73), “the new era” (73) and “a better day” (74); “the page of prophecy” that “bodes an era of freedom” (77); “the prophets of the coming era” (72) who “break down barriers to the future” (88); and social ills that “impede this good era” (21). Narrated in temporal terms, gender reform is figured as an effort that brings humanity closer to the unforeseen future, a completely new page of human history. The “divine energy” would fill the land enabling its people escape from cyclic history so full of conflicts and strife once “every path [is] laid open to Woman as freely as to Man”:

Were this done, and a slight temporary fermentation allowed to subside, we should see crystallizations more pure and of more various beauty. We

believe the divine energy would pervade nature to a degree unknown in the history of former ages, and that no discordant collision, but a ravishing harmony of the spheres, would ensue. (W 20)

This new era of “a ravishing harmony” is to be opened in Fuller’s own nation—a point about which she feels “anxious to leave no room for doubt” (W 99). America as the nation embodying the promise of the New World is to open a new age for humankind, both men and women—a belief that Fuller repeats in her concluding remarks:

I have believed and intimated that this hope would receive an ampler fruition, than ever before, in our own land.

And it will do so if this land carry out the principles from which sprang our national life. (101)

Women’s reform and the nation’s destiny are correlated for Fuller as the national “principles” suggest that “an ampler fruition” of equal gender relations would occur “in our own land.” Not only does she rewrite the Declaration anticipating the Declaration of Sentiments, she offers a gendered interpretation of *Annuity Coeptis, Novo Ordo Seclorum*—“God prospered this undertaking: it shall be the new order of the ages.”

The apparently neutral temporal scope that the words—“nineteenth century”—in the title establish then serves a nationalist claim as *Woman* makes abundantly clear that it is “now” in her own nation that “the time has come when a clear vision and better action are possible” (101). *Woman*’s broad temporal scope that encompasses “the full

recorded history of the planet” (*Through Other Continents* 53), according to Dimock, meets the definition of what she calls “deep time”—“irregular duration and extension, some extending for thousands of years or thousands of miles, each occasioned by a different tie and varying with that tie, and each loosening up the chronology and geography of the nation” (*Through Other Continents* 4). Fuller aggrandizes the temporal and spatial scope of her text by “go[ing] back to the dead, to the ancient civilizations: Egypt, Greece, Mesopotamia” (*Through Other Continents* 52). Dimock treats Fuller as one of the American authors who present “nonstandard space and time” in order to go “[a]gainst the official borders of the nation and against the fixed intervals of the clock” (*Through Other Continents* 3). The “deep time” in *Woman* renders the temporal and spatial boundary meaningless and “offer[s] shelter to one particular class of aliens: those who have no citizenship in any territorial nation because they have no citizenship in the living world” (*Through Other Continents* 58). In a world where our own being is defined by “our long sojourn on this planet, a sojourn marked by layers of relations” (*Through Other Continents* 6), all national and temporal differences disappear into “deep time” and the national identity built on territorial and racial exclusion appears to be powerless when one sees herself as connected to others. This celebration of the liberatory operation of deep time in *Woman*, however, fails to take notice of the fact that Fuller constantly comes back to her “own place and day” (*W* 97) to show that “the time drew nigh for a better care of the sex” and the “present is a good time for these efforts” to fulfill the “oracular promise as to woman” intimated throughout history (*W* 97, 77, 93, 60). Fuller, in other words, moves beyond her time to make her case that the world is

reaching the new era of gender equality in her time in her own nation. If Fuller compels us to see the condition of women in her nation through “deep time,” I’d argue, it is not to detach time and gender from all ties to nationhood but to connect them *to* it.

Fuller offers her treatise on gender as a nationalist effort to bring the American Revolution to perfection. The intellect of the founding fathers led them to discern and express the spirit of liberty through Revolution, “but the intellect,” Fuller contends, “is ever more masculine than feminine,” and “the hard intellectuality of the merely *mannish* mind” needs to be “warmed by emotion” so that “it rushes toward mother-earth, and puts on the forms of beauty” (W 61, 31, 61). For America to fulfill its promises, it first has to teach its “head [to] repres[s] no natural pulse of the heart” (W 16). *Woman* expands upon the idea that “Seeds of thought will never thrive / Till dews of love shall bid them live” (*Summer* 82). As the nation’s founding principles are in need of what Fuller calls “the feminine side, the side of love,” “it was better now to be a woman; for even the slightest achievement of good was furthering an especial work of our time” (W 22-3).

Critics who celebrate Fuller’s conception of androgyny often fail to take the connection between her feminism and nationalism into account.³⁴ There might be some

³⁴ Interpretations about Fuller’s conception of gender as androgynous abound. Charles Capper explains that “in her most radical move, she posits that the core of ‘femality’ is androgynous.” He puts Fuller’s understanding of gender in the context of the philosophical thoughts to which she was exposed: The notion of a bi-gender humanity and even divinity had been a strong undercurrent in hermetic thought from the Neoplatonists to Swedenborg, eventually flowing into German as well as later French

moments in *Woman* when Fuller seems to be “performing vital groundwork for modern theories of androgyny and gender” (Hurst 25), but, even when Fuller resists the anatomical understanding of sex, she still believes that the differences remain when it comes to the question as to what gender qualities the era and the nation need most. Besides, even when “Fuller moved out of body to formulate her concept of woman,” Dorri Beam persuasively suggests, “that move did not entail a loss of gender” because Fuller still envisioned gender as operating on a spiritual level (61). As Fuller retains gender on a spiritual level, she also explains the spiritual progress of the nation in gendered terms.

Fuller’s account of history includes the spiritual advance of a nation as she writes within a New England tradition that Bercovitch calls “the typology of America’s mission” (*The American Jeremiad* 93)—a sacred view of the nation that joins the history of the Bible to the secular history of the New World. In representing the errand into the wilderness as approaching the final stage of history, Puritans secularized typology as a tool for explaining American progress and “consecrated the American present as a movement from promise to fulfillment, and translated fulfillment from its meaning within the closed system of sacred history into a metaphor for limitless secular

social Romanticism” (*Margaret Fuller* 118). Fuller is seen “as one of the earliest exponents of androgyny” (Bartlett 103), anticipating “Cixous’s definition of ‘bisexuality’” (Bulamur 160). Von Mehren offers a similar interpretation in suggesting that Fuller’s “gender multiplicity” is linked to “the theory of sexual identity that sprang from her concept of the completely developed soul as without gender” (168).

improvement” (*The American Jeremiad* 93-4). From this fusion of sacred and secular history emerges a peculiar kind of “*American* millennialism”—“the belief in an earthly paradise [that] recasts the apocalyptic hope into something like the Edwardsian idea of progress” (*The American Jeremiad* 95). The New World will be the place of “a fulfillment of social as well as spiritual norms” for “[l]iberty, equality, and property were not merely civic ideals” but “part of God’s plan. America, as the home of libertarian principles, was the lasting ‘habitation of justice and mountain of holiness’” (*The American Jeremiad* 111). This idea that America brings the world closer to the millennial time through its political renovations finds its way into *Woman*. The world history is the history of the unfolding “principle of liberty” (*W* 12), and America, propelled by the guiding spirit of liberty, simultaneously enters secular historical time *and* moves toward “the promise of heaven” (*W* 13).

Fuller revises post-millennialism by yoking her feminist claims to the fate of the entire nation. Underwriting the temporal trajectory of *Woman* is the post-millennial confidence that the world can be perfected. Contrary to pre-millennialism that posits long tribulations, Armageddon, and cataclysmic divine judgments leading to the end of the world that would precede the coming of Jesus and his Millennial Kingdom, post-millennialism holds that “Christ would return only after the world had been perfected” to inaugurate a new epoch of history (Wright and Dresser 3). Where post-millennialists posit that “it was humanity’s task to prepare the way for the Lord, ironing out moral wrinkles from the social fabric” (Wright and Dresser 3), Fuller claims that her nation should remove the “obstructions [that] impede this good era” first “to make the earth a

part of heaven” (W 21, 5). That Fuller uses millennial thinking to advance her feminist argument has already been pointed out by Adams who calls *Woman* “part social critique and part millennialist tract” (59). Adams, however, does not discuss the temporal dimension embedded in the very notion of millennium as she sees *Woman*’s millennial vision crystallizing around the idea of an ideal marriage based on an idealized form of private relations free from oppressive gender roles. Where Adams emphasizes the centrality of heterosexual logic to Fuller’s millennial vision by referring to it as “heteromillennium,” I want to point out that Fuller was also writing when her contemporary thinkers were preoccupied with “the characteristic antebellum concern with the possibility that America had already progressed beyond its republican origins, that through its very success it had paved the way for its own destruction” (Allen 49-50).

One preoccupation that lies at the heart of Fuller’s America concerns the question as to how or whether the emerging empire would break free from the cyclic history of rise and fall of empires. *Woman* responds to the anxiety about imperial decay and presents an optimistic counterpoint to the fear that America might fall victim to its own imperial corruption by suggesting that the nation already has the moral source—albeit repressed—that would keep it from decline if it were to be properly acknowledged: the feminine soul. By allowing women “as a soul to live freely and unimpeded, to unfold such powers as were given her when we left our common home,” America would become the heavenly home on earth and bring millennial bliss to the land, rendering it free from the vicissitudes and fluctuation of time and history (W 20).

As much as *Woman* is a treatise on gender, it is also a gendered treatise on empire and history.

History constitutes one important building block of the feminism in *Woman* according to Zwarg who sees Fuller's "feminism [as] continually manifest[ing] itself in what she calls the old 'synonymizing' of 'history, *languages* [and] literature'" (23). Fuller does spend many pages for the review of the "historical progress of this matter" of woman's condition (W 18). History tells that men who were attuned to spiritual voices in themselves could also see that humanity would be redeemed through women:

Whenever a mystical whisper was heard, from Behmen down to St. Simon, sprang up the thought, that, if it be true, as the legend says, that Humanity withers through a fault committed by and a curse laid upon Woman, through her pure child, *or influence*, shall the new Adam, the redemption, arise. Innocence is to be replaced by virtue, dependence by a willing submission, in the heart of the Virgin Mother of the new race. (my emphasis W 60)

Note how casually Fuller moves from the reference to Eve to Mary, and then quickly from the divine mother—giving birth to "her pure child"—to *all* women whose female "influence" can reform a man into "the new Adam." Shifting from Christian theology to Republican Motherhood, Fuller merges the two to attribute the typological grandeur to the latter. Humanity will be regenerated through the most divine relation of women and men, that of the Virgin Mother and the Son. Where Republican Motherhood defined

mother-son relationships as the foundation of the republic, Fuller's model of divine motherhood suggests that motherhood should be the guiding principle of the empire on a spiritual level too. "The divine birds need to be brooded into life and song by mothers" so that they can sing the song of heavenly promises of the New World (W 101). Mothers offer the holiest human relation possible: "Earth knows no fairer, holier relation than that of a mother. It is one which, rightly understood, must both promote and require the highest attainments" (W 56). A nation where human relations are based on the maternal and feminine values, therefore, would naturally be the nation that is truthful to the spirit of Christianity "clearly stated in words," "Be ye perfect" (W 9). Under the moral example and instruction of women, men could be redeemed into new Adams, becoming able to open a new era in human history where human kind is at last protected from moral decline. Women are capable of more than redeeming the old as they could engender something altogether new through their ability to give birth to a new type of human race.

The future does not just come in the form of feminine redemption as it comes in an imperial form too. Fuller was well aware of "the political importance of rewriting the past in order to change the future" (Scacchi 80), and what drives her search into all historical periods is the aspiration to shape women's imperial future. History seems to suggest that women's empires bring prosperity: "In any age a Semiramis, an Elizabeth of England, a Catharine of Russia, makes her place good" (W 26). "The spiritual tendency is towards the elevation of woman" (W 60), and a spiritually elevated nation

would allow women to reign or vice versa. For the female sovereign power would bring spirituality to her land rendering it closer to “a state of perfect freedom, pure love.” “That an era approaches which shall approximate nearer to such a temper than any has yet done” is suggested through “[t]he reigns of Elizabeth of England and Isabella of Castile.” These queens “foreboded this era” and “expressed the beginning of the new state, while they forwarded its progress” (W 37). They seem to answer to “noble prophecies, auspicious for Woman,” prophecies that “the establishment of the reign of love and peace” could occur only through “an increased predominance given to the idea of Woman” (W 67). Again and again, Fuller makes a case that only in Woman’s empire could be established the “new order” and “the social fabric that is to rise from love, and supersede the old that was based on strife” (W 73). Lacking historical precision, Fuller’s observation about the historical progress under female reign reads less as a feminist revision of history than the author’s longing for the better world.

Fuller moves out of history and into prophesy. If she crafts “a new female voice” by revising “the Christian prophetic model” (“Choosing a Medium” 39), she uses the prophetic voice to reconstruct the history of imperial expansions guided by female sovereignties into the narrative of spiritual progression to foretell the imperial lot for American women³⁵. The “electrical, the magnetic element in Woman has not been fairly

³⁵ Critics mostly agree that in “taking the role of inspired prophet” (Urbanski 103), Fuller experiments with a feminine voice of female religious orators. One recent argument against such a view is given by Jeffrey Steele. To warn “the collective ‘body’ that had been contaminated by the toxin of corrupt social values and materialized aims,”

brought out at any period” (W 61), but, at last in Fuller’s own time and nation, it is about to manifest itself thanks to a woman’s imperial authority:

All these motions of the time, tides that betoken a waxing moon,
overflow upon our land. The world, at large, is readier to let woman learn
and manifest the capacities of her nature than it ever was before, and here
is a less encumbered field and freer air than any where else. And it ought to
be so; we ought to pay for Isabella’s jewels. (64)

America wouldn’t be the land of “freer air” for women if it were not for “Isabella’s jewels.” Fuller equates the colonial enterprise of Isabella’s Spain with the action of “open[ing] a new world to her sex” (64)—a heritage she wants for “[a]nother Isabella” who “at this time ascends the throne” to embrace and continue. American women then seem to be faced with contradictory tasks of fulfilling the imperial design of the New World *and* keeping the nation intact from imperial sins. They somehow have to chastise men for imperial aggressions while at the same time consecrating the colonial memory of the Spanish invasion of the land. But how different is Isabella’s Columbus from the US military willing to wage imperial wars? The question that a present-day reader

Fuller develops a prophetic voice that is emphatically male (“Sympathy and Prophecy” 162). Steele sees *Woman* as the first text in which Fuller begins to assume the role of a *masculine* prophet to offer “prophetic denunciations of social ‘pollution’” or “prophetic anger” (171, 174)—a persona that would later evolve, in her *New York Daily Tribune* writings, into “the stern father figure who assumed a stance of prophetic admonition,” a figure “analogous to that of the great prophets of the Old Testament” (170, 174). It is my contention, however, that the prophetic voices about Utopian future fills *Woman*, and those voices are repeatedly feminine.

would raise does not seem to occur to Fuller as she believes “the nature of woman is opposed to war” (“The Wrongs of American Women. The Duty of American Women” 235).

America as a civilized nation came into being through a woman’s colonial enterprise. Fuller urges her readers to “accept as an omen for ourselves that it was Isabella who furnished Columbus with the means of coming hither. This land must pay back its debt to Woman, without whose aid it would not have been brought into alliance with the civilized world” (W 38). Zwarg sees Fuller here as revealing “her growing awareness” of women’s complicity in colonial violence or “invasion of America” (Zwarg 167-8). If Fuller betrays her ambivalence towards Isabella by using the word, “omen” which “can portend ill as well as good” (Zwarg 168), however, she also successfully represses such feeling and her own historical awareness to build her case for women’s central role in building empires in the American continent. Fuller’s celebration of Isabella is immediately followed by the story of another “graceful and meaning figure . . . in the Conquest of Mexico”: “the Indian girl Marina” (W 38). Isabella enables the colonial venture into the American continent, but the process of building New Spain would have been more brutal and violent without “Malinche” (W 38). An Aztec princess who “accompanied Cortez, and was his interpreter in all the various difficulties of his career,” Marina “stood at his side, on the walls of the besieged palace, to plead with her enraged countrymen” before the conquest, “and, after the conquest, her gentle intercession was often of avail to the conquered” (W 38). An

intermediary figure between the conquered and the conqueror, Marina represents for Fuller the feminine intervention into the violent process of imperial expansion. Contrary to Fuller's representation of "Malinche" as a pacifying negotiator between two races, she could not keep Cortéz from slaughtering the natives, but historical details are conveniently overlooked for the sake of writing a woman's history of empires—a history of female empire builders whose "aid" brought the New World "into alliance with the civilized world." By aiding her people to be civilized, Malinche brings the land itself closer to a more enlightened future, and as such, "[t]he poem of the Future may be read in some features of the story of 'Malinche'" (W 38).

Removing violence from the history of the empires of Elizabeth and Isabella, Fuller does not so much revise their history as replace it with the fantasy of female political empowerment. Fuller envisions that a better future would arrive only when women are allowed to "find their peculiar secret" so that they could be "renovated and baptized" into "self-possessed, wise, and graceful womanhood" (W 72). Again, the victory of such womanhood is "presaged" through the female authority of the most powerful imperial woman of Fuller's time: Victoria. For Fuller, "it is not without significance that the name of the queen of our mother-land should at this crisis be Victoria—Victoria the First. Perhaps to us it may be given to disclose the era thus outwardly presaged" (W 64). Rapt by a messianic vision of a new species of woman who would keep human "soul . . . ever young, ever virgin," knowing that "she . . . is born for Truth and Love in their universal energy," Fuller prophesies that when such a

woman comes to “assume her [spiritual] inheritance, Mary would not be the only virgin mother” (W 104). Again, this divine reference shifts too quickly into the political fantasy of women’s, or to be more specific, Anglo-American women’s ascendancy: “And will not she soon appear?—the woman who shall vindicate their birthright for all women; who shall teach them what to claim, and how to use what they obtain? Shall not her name be for her era Victoria, for her country and life Virginia?” (W 104).

The new era of woman’s empire prophesied in the reign of Elizabeth is brought nearer to completion through Victoria and would at last complete itself through “Las Exaltadas” a class of “maiden[s]” who “would issue a virtue by which [the world] would, at last, be exalted too” (W 60, 91). Having “minds so truly virgin, without narrowness or ignorance,” they are the “harbingers and leaders of a new era” (W 91). By the new regenerated human race engendered by these new women the world would at last have an empire free from decay. The “new era” when “woman has her fair chance” will witness “the poem of the hour [that] will vie with that of the ages,” “the lyrical overflow of a divine rapture, and a new music” (W 96, 72). For this to happen, Fuller wants to have “woman established in the rights of an immortal being” by restoring “the idea of woman . . . nobly manifested in . . . mythologies and poems” of different nations and ages (W 41, 28). One mythic truth that she wants to put life into is the Scandinavian myth of “Iduna, (Goddess of Immortality)” (W 92). A Goddess of youth, Iduna is said to own a magic basket of infinite numbers of the apples of eternal youth. It was “her apples of pure gold” that made the gods immortal, but Loke tricked Iduna “by

promising to show, on a marvellous tree he had discovered, apples beautiful as her own, if she would only take them with her for a comparison. Thus having lured her beyond the heavenly domain, she was seized and carried away captive by the powers of misrule” (W 92). In the absence of the fruit, gods began to age and “[d]iscords arose, and love grew cold” (W 92). Fuller inserts the myth of Iduna in her concluding pages to reinforce her argument that the “era of truly human life was postponed” as the feminine principle, the needed source “required to perfect man” has been unjustly repressed (W 9, 12). Iduna’s story perfectly recapitulates Fuller’s claim that the feminine side of “twin exponents of a divine thought,” one of the “two halves of one thought,” should be revitalized to “make the earth a part of heaven” (W 4). The Edenic origin is to be restored when Iduna, “[r]eturning from the future to the present, . . . moves along the declivity of centuries to the valley where the lily flower may concentrate all its fragrance” (W 92). The femininity personified in Iduna also personifies both the mythic past *and* the utopian future. For Fuller, “the future Eden” is to be brought to us when we recreate the first and best age of the world in which “heavenly genius dwelt among the shepherds, to sing to them and teach them how to sing” (W 8-9). The “triumph moments” (W 9) when humanity was at its acme of excellence are to be reenacted through femininity.

Fuller radicalizes the temporal dimension of Republican Motherhood. Where the influential ideology cast motherhood as the surest source to secure the national future, “Woman in the nineteenth century,” is now seen *as* future. This is a point echoed

by Nathaniel Hawthorne when he concludes *The Scarlet Letter* with strikingly congruent accounts that the “angel and apostle of the coming revelation must be a woman, indeed, but lofty, pure, and beautiful; and wise, moreover, not through dusky grief, but the ethereal medium of joy; and showing how sacred love should make us happy, by the truest test of a life successful to such an end!” (228) Hawthorne wants his readers to dwell upon the possibility that Hester “might be the destined prophetess” sent to the Puritan community with the “mission of divine and mysterious truth” (227)—a point that is anticipated by Child’s depiction of her Puritan heroine. As the rare sentimental subject among Puritan bigots, Mary Conant definitely represents the future voice of the nation. And most importantly, Fuller’s vision of women as the pioneers of the better future offers the very terms in which she is remembered by her contemporaries. In *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* Emerson recalls that “She was here, among our anxious citizens . . . as if sent to refine and polish her countrymen, and *announce a better day*” (my emphasis 311-12). The idea that American women occupy a “coming” future and the feminine force brings futurity serves American imperialism. When one could believe that Isabella and Elizabeth were conquering better future as opposed to land, one could also encourage white women to participate in empire building by helping them imagine their colonial ventures as the temporal conquest of bringing better future to the world.

CHAPTER V

BENEVOLENT WHITENESS AND EMPIRE IN WILLIAM WELLS BROWN'S *CLOTEL*

America for Fuller, and for Child too, was literally a New World where a new type of imperial subjectivity emerges in the body of American women. If Fuller could proudly boast about the New World possibilities for women of her nation, however, William Wells Brown offers a quite different portrayal of the nation in *Clotel*. Fuller observes that “the energy here at work is very great,” and from such lively national “energy” feels that America “is destined to accomplish great things for Human Nature and be the mother of a nobler race, perhaps, than the world has yet known” (“American Facts” 126). A prophetic vision might see America as the land of a “nobler” human race yet to be born, but the eye of a fugitive slave sees the living souls being born under the peculiarly American condition: “half whites” (*Clotel* 81). The first chapter of *Clotel* begins with the observation about the increasing numbers of mixed blood people in the South: “With the growing population of slaves in the Southern States of America, there is a fearful increase of half whites, most of whose fathers are slaveowners, and their mothers slaves” (81). Far from mothering “a nobler race,” the nation is giving birth to a new breed, which is “of itself, the best evidence of the degraded and immoral condition of the relation of master and slave in the United States of America” (81-2).

A “self-educated son of slavery” (“Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown” 78), Brown sees the presence of whiteness in the sons and daughters of

slavery as a mark not of race but of degraded morality that sanctions and even institutionalizes the sexual abuse of female slaves. The imperial logic of Republican Motherhood begins to unravel before slave mothers. The nation that shamelessly tramples on mothers' rights for their children cannot be an "empire of mother." To paint "American" mothers as expanding their civilizing and Christianizing force beyond the boundary of their domestic state to the world, that is, to endow white mothers with national/imperial subjectivity, one has to deny slave mothers' access to the American national subjectivity. If "republican womanhood stands as a discourse on femininity which operates only on *condition* of the black woman's exclusion" (Cherniavsky 3), Brown puts race at the center of his critique and revision of Republican Motherhood to de-essentialize motherhood's association with whiteness. On the one hand, he destabilizes the narrative of the nation as the extended republican family guided by the maternal influence emanating from woman's spheres by bringing visibility to the elided genealogy of slave mothers. While Brown indicts "the American house of bondage" ("Narrative" 72) for the crime upon the most sacred human relation of a mother and her child, he also invokes and revises the central tenet of Republican Motherhood to mobilize white womanhood for abolitionist purposes. What is needed to keep the republican virtue of the young nation intact—to remove the "stain from America's otherwise fair escutcheon" (226)—is the moral fairness of white women. Rather than giving white women's moral duty a nationalist cast, however, *Clotel* puts it in the transatlantic context of the emancipationist politics of the British Empire.

Where the previous writers produce the language of white women's subjectivity by exploring and advocating their role in empire-building, Brown's interest in the intersections of motherhood, abolition, empire, benevolent whiteness, and representation characterize *Clotel*. Brown reproduces and reshapes the central premise of sentimental abolitionist fiction, namely, the political power of the moral "fairness" of white femininity to bring the nation closer to its utopian possibility. In *Clotel* the desire for abolition is aligned with the desire for a better world where the racial violence of slavery is peacefully resolved into benevolent interracial relations. The aspiration for this better world is cast as the aspiration of a better empire. According to Martha Schoolman, Brown developed a nuanced sense of history that enabled him to discern the history of violence disguised and concealed by glorified monuments of European civilizations before he set out to write his first novel. Published a year before *Clotel*, *Three Years in Europe* (1852) demonstrates how Brown shifted from naively following the scripts of European imperialism to a "critical-cosmopolitan" understanding of the complicated history of empires checkered through violent moments (Schoolman 26). But the imperatives of abolitionism seem to override any awareness about inconsistencies inherent to imperial expansions in *Clotel* where Brown implies that slavery requires imperial solutions assisted by white women's support. Brown confronts his nation's hypocritical celebration of motherhood and woman's moral power but with revealingly ambiguous results owing to the contradictions of the language of empire—the language he challenges and renegotiates to create his first fictional account of the nation.

Tragic Slave Mothers and the Maternal Benevolence of White Women

Prefacing the fiction of *Clotel* is the author's account of his own life and how he came to be "truly free" after arriving "on British soil" where *everyone* "recognized [him] as a man and an equal." In England, even "[t]he very dogs in the streets appeared conscious of [his] manhood." The nation offers the author a refuge and protects him from the tyrannical law of the "prison-house of American bondage" (74):

My old master may make his appearance here, with the constitution of the United States in his pocket, the fugitive slave law in one hand and the chains in the other, and claim me as his property; but all will avail him nothing. I can here stand and look the tyrant in the face, and tell him that I am his equal! (73)

As a living refutation of America's self-congratulatory claim that it is the "land of the free," Brown can confidently assert that "England is, indeed, the 'land of the free, and the home of the brave'" (73). Through this rhetorical gesture quite typical of American abolitionists, Brown situates his fiction about Jefferson's slave daughters in the context of transatlantic contestation over which nation is truly the land of liberty. The writer of the Declaration of Independence achieved freedom from English rule, but independence paradoxically ended up reinforcing the freedom of "the tyrant" to "claim [a man] as his property" under the protection of "the constitution of the United States" (73). The

dream of a fugitive slave on the run would naturally to be under “Victoria’s domain” (59) where slavery was outlawed in 1833. Whereas the imperial rule of the mother country was extending the sphere of liberty, the nation born out of the revolution against the rule has ironically ended up being in need of emulating the beneficent workings of the British Empire.

In the years after independence, America proved itself to be far from Jefferson’s vision of an American “empire for liberty”. This result is hardly surprising to Brown given that the founding father himself did not even grant his own daughters freedom and that “Jefferson is not the only American statesman who has spoken high-sounding words in favour of freedom, and then left his own children to die slaves” (158). To offer “an unvarnished narrative” that “speaks of a thousand wrongs and woes” of the nation (199), Brown chooses a topic repressed by the official national narrative: the maternal genealogy of Jefferson’s slave daughters.

The story of *Clotel* starts where “a bright mulatto” slave Currer (85) and her two light-skinned daughters fathered by Thomas Jefferson are sold on the auction block. Clotel is purchased by Horatio Green, a wealthy young white man who makes her his mistress and becomes a father of her daughter, Mary. Her mother Currer and sister Althesa were not sold on the same day and were sent to a slave market in New Orleans where Currer is purchased by Mr. Peck, a preacher. Georgiana, the only daughter of the preacher, does not share her father’s belief and prepares to emancipate his slaves after his death. Shortly before Georgiana and her husband, Carlton, liberate their slaves,

Currer dies from yellow fever. Althesa marries Henry Morton, a doctor from the North, who buys her but fails to manumit her after the purchase. They both die from yellow fever, leaving their two daughters—Ellen and Jane—no legal protection from enslavement. To escape sexual enslavement, Ellen commits suicide, and Jane dies in despair. Clotel is sold into the deep South after Green marries the only daughter of a man of power to pursue his political ambitions while her daughter Mary works as a slave to Green's wife, Gertrude. In her new master's house, Clotel meets an intelligent, industrious dark-skinned slave named William who agrees to flee with her. Clotel poses as a white man travelling with "his" servant, William, and together, they successfully escape to the free state of Ohio. William heads north towards Canada, but Clotel goes south to Virginia to rescue her daughter, regardless of the danger awaiting a runaway slave. When she manages to make it to Richmond, she is captured and taken to one of the "Negro pens" in Washington D.C. She escapes again but slave catchers follow her cornering her on Long Bridge from which she throws herself into the river. Growing up a servant in her father's house, Clotel's daughter Mary falls in love with a light-skinned slave named George Green who participates in the Nat Turner rebellion, for which he is sentenced to death. To save George's life, Mary visits George's prison and changes clothes with him. While Mary stays in prison posing as George, the male slave in Mary's clothes gets away and makes it to Canada. To earn the money to buy Mary's freedom, George works very hard, but gets informed that Mary was sold to a slave trader for aiding his escape. A Frenchman, smitten by Mary's beauty, helps her escape

slavery and marries her in Europe and dies. Mary and George meet again by chance in Dunkirk and marry and stay in Europe.

Anne duCille observes that “[a]s not simply the president’s but the nation’s illegitimate daughter—as (within the) pale as any white woman—Clotel symbolizes the hypocrisy of a social order that puts one woman on an auction block and another on a pedestal, *even though they look the same*” (455-6). Clotel’s whiteness, in other words, enables Brown to orchestrate a critique of ideologies that invest symbolic and national significance in womanhood. If the “profession of authorship” that Brown performs in *Clotel* is that of “cultural editor . . . gather[ing] the documents that reveal the national disunity—not the meaninglessness of the national text but rather its meaningful incoherence” (Ernest 34), I would argue that the central site where such “meaningful incoherence” gets to be revealed in the novel is Clotel’s apparent whiteness.

Not only is she “much fairer than many of the white women of the South” and “as finely defined as any of her sex of pure Anglo-Saxon” (167, 87), she is the epitome of “a virtuous character” (88). “[L]ike most of [her] own sex in America,” Clotel was “well grown” under her mother’s care who was “early resolved to bring her daughters up as ladies” (85). “[A] devoted Christian, and perfectly trustworthy,” she also has “a sweet temper” and “a good moral character,” and is “intelligent” (87). She is everything that an ideal American home needs, but these items of virtue do not ensure her a conjugal family. *Clotel* shows how the expressions that could describe an ideal American womanhood could be used as the sales pitch that an auctioneer uses to

describe “the value of the article” to be bid upon. The scene where Clotel is put on an auction before “those who were waiting with a wish to become her purchasers” as “Real Albino, fit for a fancy girl for any one” illustrates how “no safeguard is thrown around virtue” under slavery (87, 84). The southern United States is the society that fails to guarantee right behavior towards feminine virtue as the presence of a hapless girl who happens to be “as white as” the bidders and a “daughter[r] of Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of American Independence, and one of the presidents of the great republic” creates no sympathy but obscene and vulgar “[l]aughing, joking, swearing, smoking, spitting” among the crowd (87-88). “[T]he scene was indeed strange” (87), the narrator observes and offers his comments on it:

This was a Southern auction, at which the bones, muscles, sinews, blood, and nerves of a young lady of sixteen were sold for five hundred dollars; her moral character for two hundred; her improved intellect for one hundred; her Christianity for three hundred; and her chastity and virtue for four hundred dollars more. And this, too, in a city thronged with churches, whose tall spires look like so many signals pointing to heaven, and whose ministers preach that slavery is a God-ordained institution! (88)

The guiding principle of “our boasted Christian land” (88) is not religion but economics that turns human value into exchange value.

Clotel is representative of the ideal femininity that could be nurtured on the American soil, but her tragedy shows that America is *not* the nation where such

womanhood is respectfully treated. The dominant discourse of gender that casts American women's elevated social position as the sign of national superiority and the ideal American woman as the moral heart of the nation, therefore, is revealed to be untenable. Far from respectfully acknowledging the moral power of woman, America is the nation that enslaves and drives to suicide the "heroic woman" whose "virtues and goodness of heart would have done honour to one in a higher station of life, and who, if she had been born in any other land but that of slavery, would have been honoured and loved" (207-8). *Clotel's* romantic relation to Horatio Green also illustrates that under "the most depraved social condition" (82) of slavery one cannot expect marriage to function as the arena of moral growth. Brown champions the institution of marriage "[a]s the only asylum for true education . . . the first and last sanctuary of human culture" and "the root of church and state" (83). The "moral degradation" of slavery coincides with the degradation of marriage and family. The danger that slavery poses to a republic reveals itself in white woman's spheres for "[e]very married woman in the far South looks upon her husband as unfaithful, and regards every quadroon servant as a rival" (150). Where the racial relation is debased by slavery, all other human relations and the society as a whole are debased too: "What social virtues are possible in a society of which injustice is the primary characteristic? in a society which is divided into two classes, masters and slaves?" (150). Even under such circumstances *Clotel* fleetingly offers a glimpse of an interracial romance unpolluted by the tyrannical elements of racist culture. *Clotel* and Horatio first meet in one of "negro ball" parties that are "democratic gatherings, where gentlemen, shopkeepers, and their clerks, all appear

upon terms of perfect equality” (86), and develops “mutual love” maturing into a “marriage sanctioned by heaven, although unrecognised on earth” (100). “[U]nfettered by laws of the land,” however, such a marriage cannot last long (102).

America, in short, does not live up to the cultural values it propagates, even though Clotel fits the ideal of true womanhood. Her “conscience . . . and the high value she placed upon virtue” together with her courage to “carry out the promptings of the finer feelings of her heart” (100, 200) show that she is “[t]rue to woman’s nature” (200). Brave and chaste, her character also unites the original public sense of virtue with its feminine sense. Deriving “from the Latin *virtus*, and thus from *vir*, which means ‘man,’” virtue used to mean manly “commitment to the American republican cause” of “political freedom” before the late 1780s when the meaning of virtue became increasingly feminized and began to evoke traits like chastity and female sexual prudence (Bloch 43, 41). Clotel, as “the daughter of Thomas Jefferson, a president of the United States, a man distinguished as the author of the Declaration of American Independence, and one of the first statesmen of that country,” has a “heart” that inherits “the unconquerable love of liberty” (207, 205), but the nation responds to her love of freedom by driving her to suicide in the heart of the nation. Clotel’s death delivers the divine warning against the nation:

But God by his Providence had . . . determined. He had determined that an appalling tragedy should be enacted that night, within plain sight of the President’s house and the capital of the Union, which should be an

evidence wherever it should be known, of the unconquerable love of liberty the heart may inherit; as well as a fresh admonition to the slave dealer, of the cruelty and enormity of his crimes. (205)

Brown presents Clotel's choice to throw herself into the Potomac as a heroic act to defend her freedom against the pursuing "merciless soul dealer[s]" (205), casting her at once as a victim and a hero:

Had Clotel escaped from oppression in any other land, in the disguise in which she fled from the Mississippi to Richmond, and reached the United States, no honour within the gift of the American people would have been too good to have been heaped upon the heroic woman. But she was a slave, and therefore out of the pale of their sympathy. They have tears to shed over Greece and Poland; they have an abundance of sympathy for "poor Ireland;" they can furnish a ship of war to convey the Hungarian refugees from a Turkish prison to the "land of the free and home of the brave." They boast that America is the "cradle of liberty;" if it is, I fear they have rocked the child to death. (207)

"American people" are quick to express "sympathy" for those fighting for their freedom in foreign lands. For foreign affairs that offer an opportunity for the nation to act as the defender of liberty, America does not hesitate to act. Or at least that is how the supporters of America's foreign intervention want the nation to act: as the "empire for liberty." Americans, however, put "out of the pale of their sympathy" those Americans whose presence gives the lie to the nation's celebration of freedom.

Lest the symbolic significance of the setting of Clotel's death be lost, Brown quotes a poem purportedly based on the actual incident of a female slave's suicide on the Long Bridge. Written by Grace Greenwood, the popular journalist, children's writer, and poet, "The Leap from the Long Bridge" equates the oppression of female slaves with the nation's failure to nurture virtuous female citizenry: "From Columbia's glorious capitol, / Columbia's daughter flees" (208). To condemn the nation even further, Brown adds the final stanza written by himself:

"That bond woman's corse--let Potomac's proud wave
Go bear it along *by our Washington's grave*,
And heave it high up on that hallowed strand,
To tell of the freedom he won for our land.

A weak woman's corse, by freemen chased down;
Hurrah for our country! hurrah!
To freedom she leaped, through drowning and death--
Hurrah for our country! hurrah!"

Clotel's death, like numerous other deaths of fugitive slaves, is inhumanely and brutally treated. In an uncivilized manner, her body is "deposited" in "a hole dug in the sand" by the Potomac "without either inquest being held over it, or religious service being performed" (207). The nation does not even offer a proper burial ground for such a heroic death, but Brown awards a "weak woman's corse" a rightful place by placing it alongside the "hallowed" national monument, "*Washington's grave*," and thus

compares her death for freedom with the founding father's fight for freedom. Here, Brown tellingly miscalls Washington Monument—near the Long Bridge—“*Washington's grave*”—which is actually at Mt. Vernon—moving not just the heroine's body to the national site of monumental significance but bringing that site *to* her too. Brown's revision of national myth involves poetic license of freely moving and rearranging national symbols built to commemorate the “*freedom he won for our land*,” the freedom that only produces “freemen” who “chas[e] down” a “weak woman.” The male political struggle for freedom from imperial restraints that Washington embodies, in other words, leads to white *men's* freedom *to enslave*, and that is what Clotel's death should “*tell*” the nation.

The racial injustice of slavery in the above stanza is cast as the gendered violence upon the helpless yet heroic woman who is willing to “ris[k] her own liberty for [her own daughter]” (200). Slavery makes America the nation of “mothers weeping for their children, breaking the night-silence with the shrieks of their breaking hearts. From some you will hear the burst of bitter lamentation, while from others the loud hysteric laugh, denoting still deeper agony” (105). “[U]nheard and unheeded by man,” however, the “amount of human agony and suffering which sends its cry from the slave markets and negro pens” is “[k]nown to God only” (105). The living witness to “the different phases of the ‘*peculiar institution*’” (51), Brown himself knows *and* feels the profound sorrow of female slaves, and brings the oppressed women within the pale of white sympathy through his novel. His “most bitter experience” of slavery is about his own mother and sister whose pain taught him “that nothing could be more heart-rending than to see a

dear and beloved mother or sister tortured by unfeeling men, and to hear her cries, and not be able to render the least aid” (50). As a slave, he was unable to protect his mother and sister, but as an author he can now confront the reader with a series of wrongs inflicted upon female slaves. If *Clotel*’s “narrative [centering] around three generations of black women” sets it apart from other abolitionist texts that were “evolving as a male-centered discourse constructed around what Frederick Douglass and other male abolitionists called manhood rights” (duCille 455), it also presents the crime of slavery first and foremost as the crime upon womanhood.

The conception of “America as manifesting the universal progress of women” (Kaplan 40) is refuted in *Clotel*, but its attendant discourse of white women’s moral duty to expand the “empire of mother” is not. The nation might not live up to its words, but that makes white women’s moral determination all the more needed. The novel shows that a white woman can achieve what founding fathers have failed to do, namely, expanding the sphere of liberty for “American brothers of every hue and complexion” (162). White men in the novel do not even guarantee their own black descendant’s freedom, but a white woman like Georgiana Carlton brings “into action the enlarged benevolence” by liberating her own slaves (181)³⁶. As the only character who is given the appellation of “The Young Christian,” “the work of emancipation for which she labored” (184) illustrates woman’s moral power to regenerate the nation. In a chapter titled “The Christian’s Death,” Georgiana is depicted as dying a saintly death: “Peace to

³⁶ Even Henry Morton, Althesa’s husband fails to legally take care of his daughters’ freedom due to his negligent failure to emancipate his slave wife.

her ashes! she fought the fight, obtained the Christian's victory, and wears the crown" (184). At first glance, Georgiana's dying face—"pale, feeble, emaciated, with death stamped upon her countenance" (183)—might seem to affirm Krista Frye's claim that Brown uses albino imagery to connote the "idea of whites as both themselves dead and as bringers of death" (528). Not only is she dead, she fails to biologically reproduce: "Many of the white women of the text, such as Horatio's wife, Gertrude, and the slaveowner Georgiana, fail to reproduce, their lifeless wombs in stark contrast to the fecundity of slave women such as Dinah" (Frye 528-29). True, Georgiana is not a mother in a biological sense, but rather than indicating her incapacity to be a mother, I'd argue, it amplifies her maternal power to guide other people to the righteous path. Through Georgiana Brown separates motherhood from mother; mothers may produce children, but motherhood, it seems, produces morally renewed human beings. She appears as the maternal center of her home and dies as such in quite a similar manner that Eva does in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. As Gillian Brown points out, Eva's death represents "the apotheosis of the angelic, domestic tradition of femininity and the ascension of maternal power" (29). Just as "Eva emblemizes virtues of motherhood" through her ability to instruct Christian morals and values (G. Brown 33), Georgiana's maternal virtue lies in her ability to "convert" other people. She might not give birth to anyone in the novel, but she gives *new* birth to her husband by "convert[ing] him from infidelity to Christianity; from the mere theory of liberty to practical freedom" and making him "*the newly born child of God*" (my emphasis 184, 128). Though "a young girl, much younger than himself," Georgiana is still Carlton's "religious teacher" and "a lamp to

his feet, and a light to his path,” and becomes “respected and revered” by him who “regarded her in that light, that every one will those whom they know to be their superiors” (127, 152, 184, 152). Under Georgiana’s guidance, Carlton becomes a strong supporter of her efforts “for the refreshment of the human race” (162). “[H]er emancipated people,” in turn, respond with “grateful appreciation of the boon their benefactors were bestowing upon them” by transforming themselves into new people (184, 162):

They were no longer apparently the same people. A sedateness, a care, an economy, an industry, took possession of them, to which there seemed to be no bounds but in their physical strength. They were never tired of labouring, and seemed as though they could never effect enough. They became temperate, moral, religious, setting an example of innocent, unoffending lives to the world around them, which was seen and admired by all. (163)

Georgiana’s slaves readily prove that they are capable of leading their own lives in a “temperate, moral, religious” manner once freed from oppression. What the “sons and daughters of Africa” (183) need seems to be the white benevolence from a woman like Georgiana who “feel[s] deeply for the injured negro,” being attuned to the “unguarded expressions of the feelings of the negroes” and sees that “*the idea that he was born to be free*” is ingrained in the soul of slaves (109, 155). The narrator prays to God for more people like Georgiana: “Oh, that God may give more such persons to take

the whip-scarred negro by the hand, and raise him to a level with our common humanity!” (185). Susan M. Ryan downplays the importance of Georgiana’s benevolence in the novel by suggesting that even when Brown presents “a conventional version of interracial benevolence . . . [of] the gradual emancipation” by her, he does so to “emphasiz[e] the slaves’ industriousness, demonstrating their readiness for the opportunity to improve their own lives” (166). But the novel makes a clear point of glorifying her “greatness.” “If true greatness consists in doing good to mankind, then was Georgiana Carlton an ornament to human nature,” the narrator praises (185). She mends the broken heart, makes whole the families broken by the tyranny of slavery, and brings them the domestic bliss they deserve: “Who can think of the broken hearts made whole, of sad and dejected countenances now beaming with contentment and joy, of the mother offering her free-born babe to heaven, and of the father whose cup of joy seems overflowing in the presence of his family, where none can molest or make him afraid” (185). Whereas the emancipation enacted out of interracial benevolence brings happiness to the former slaves, the slave revolts started by male slaves only end in the vicious cycle of interracial violence. Later in *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and its Patriots* (1855) Brown would use “American founding principles to advocate violent overthrow of the slave power” (Castronovo 166), but in *Clotel* he does not approve the use of violence by demonstrating the horror of at Turner’s violent insurrection.³⁷

³⁷ According to Levine it is in 1857 that “Brown offers a resolution asserting the slaves’ right to use revolutionary violence to obtain their freedom” (*Clotel* 38)

Turning the racial animosity into “carnage . . . added to carnage, and the blood . . . flowed to avenge the blood” of each race, male rebellion only creates “the ravages of slavery” that are worse than slavery (203).

So far as the racial oppression and distrust remain in the nation, the seed of the ravaging rebellions remains too. If Brown starts his fiction with the diagnosis that “a fearful increase of half white” (81) is the central issue of slavery, he explains why such increase is “fearful” twenty three chapters later: “The infusion of Anglo-Saxon with African blood has created an insurrectionary feeling among the slaves of America hitherto unknown. Aware of their blood connection with their owners, these mulattoes labour under the sense of their personal and social injuries; and tolerate, if they do not encourage in themselves, low and vindictive passions” (201). Here Brown plays with the contemporary notion of the Anglo-Saxon race as *the* race that possesses an innate capacity for freedom. The nation, however, fails to reproduce such racial inheritance as it allows white men’s sexual violence upon slave women; infused into the bodies of slaves, such propensity for liberty could result only in the form of “insurrectionary feeling.” Slavery produces illegitimate children who are particularly sensitive to the contradiction of the system ruled by masters enslaving their own sons and daughters. As far as the feelings of the “personal and social injuries” of “these mulattoes” remain unconsolated, their “insurrectionary feeling” might erupt into slave revolts anytime. Slavery poses a threat not just to national morality but to its security too. “Of all causes intended to benefit mankind,” then, “the abolition of chattel slavery must necessarily be

placed amongst first” (181) for it will benefit white men too. Nat Turner starts the revolt because “by too many proofs” he knew that “the slave could expect no justice at the hand of the slave owner” (201), which should caution slaveholders about their cruelty. Through Georgiana, then, Brown explores the possibility of justice promoted by a slave owner and offers a path of moral action to his white readers.

In the world of *Clotel*, the real revolution starts from a woman’s “heart, the habitation of benevolence and truth” (184)—a point that Brown also makes in the memoir published with the novel. While on the run, the author runs across a Quaker man who brings him to his home, and there the fugitive slave experiences the moment of rebirth: “He began to feel the pulsations of a new existence. White men always scorned him, but now a white benevolent woman felt glad to wait on him; it was a revolution in his experience” (“Narrative” 62). For the first time in his life, the fugitive slave experiences true white benevolence, an experience so revolutionary that he feels he has “a new existence” (“Narrative” 62). The moment that he finds himself “regarded as a man by a white family,” is the moment when he begins to see himself finally as a human: “I was no more a chattel, but a MAN” (“Narrative” 62). It takes the humanity of white people to assert the humanity of a “chattel,” which arises in the form of manhood. Freedom causes such a complete transformation of the former self that Brown himself feels alienated from his own old self: “The fact that I was a freeman—could walk, talk, eat, and sleep as a man, and no one to stand over me with the blood-clotted cow-hide—all this made me feel that I was not myself” (“Narrative” 62-3). This model of black

manhood arising out of white acceptance and leading to interracial solidarity is starkly different from Fredrick Douglass's model. In his autobiography, Douglass narrates how the battle with Covey made him feel "revived within [him] a sense of [his] own manhood" and "inspired [him] again with a determination to be free" (68). Manhood, for Douglass, is something that asserts itself through a violent and masculine confrontation with a white man. No matter how heroic such attempts to prove one's manhood through physical rebellion could be, however, those attempts often result in even more fatal violence upon the rebellious slaves as *Clotel*'s depiction of slave revolt suggests.³⁸

Brown offers the Quaker "the privilege of naming him," as a sign of gratitude for "the hand of friendship [extended] to him" and becomes "the newly-christend freeman" ("Narrative" 63). In placing "the benevolent man" in a position to bequeath his own name to himself, Brown seems to reinforce the white paternalism of abolitionist rhetoric. The way Brown articulates a black male authorial voice through *Clotel*, however, complicates his own conventional gesture. As many critics have pointed out, the very act of writing his own narrative as a preface for his own novel is itself an act of resistance to the white abolitionist practice of offering authenticating letters for slave narratives; by assuming the authority of the authenticating voices of white abolitionists

³⁸ Paul Gilmore offers a similar explanation that Brown "critiques Douglass's construction of a black voice and black manhood through physical resistance" (58), providing more evidence from *Narrative of William W. Brown* (1847) where Brown tells a story about a slave named Randall whose physical resistance leads to being "'subdued' by the cruel overseer. In Brown's narrative active resistance to the mechanisms of slavery does not make one a man, as Douglass insisted; instead it leads to one's being completely unmanned" (58)

that usually prefates “professional fugitives,” Brown authorizes himself as a fiction writer (P. Gilmore 41)³⁹. Brown might cater to the white fantasy of black gratitude and deference, but even when he includes such moments into his narrative, he refuses to follow the logic of white abolitionism that enforces the fugitives’ status as helped and whites as helper by constructing his own authorial voice.

Benevolence is a theme that suffuses *Clotel*. If antebellum “rhetorics of benevolence . . . overlapped with and helped to construct . . . ideologies of race and nation” (S. Ryan 1), Brown intervenes into the conversation on benevolence by exploring its utopian possibility in *Clotel*.⁴⁰ As mentioned above, *Clotel* foregrounds the emancipatory potential of white woman’s benevolence through Georgiana. If “*Clotel*

³⁹ For more discussions about Brown’s inscription of his authority through the authorship of the prefacing autobiography in *Clotel*, see Russ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation: American Genealogies of Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995) 167, 211; Carla L. Peterson, “Capitalism, Black (Under)development, and the Production of the African-American Novel in the 1850s,” *American Literary History* 4 (winter 1992): 563; and William L. Andrews, “The Novelization of Voice in Early African American Narrative,” *PMLA* 105 (January 1990): 23–34.

⁴⁰ Following Susan M. Ryan’s suggestion, I use “benevolence” as a distinct concept from sentimentalism. Benevolence, according to Ryan, was “what Raymond Williams has called a ‘keyword,’ that defies brief or singular definition, engaging instead in a complex field of ‘ideas and values’” (9). During the antebellum period benevolence was more than “a delimited and conservative set of beliefs and practices” as it was a “contested paradigm” in which the questions about race were addressed and explored by both conservatives and liberals (9). Ryan shows how positions on race were predicated on benevolence across the political spectrum, but I wish to show through my reading of *Clotel* that benevolence was also a “keyword” for empire.

becomes the encompassing document that represents the cultural battles over race and enslavement by encompassing those battles, quoting them, and joining them” (Ernest 34), it makes Georgiana—“the most lecture-prone character in the novel” (Sanborn 65)—lead the “cultural battles” by having her repeat the words lifted from contemporary abolitionist texts. The debate about interracial benevolence is one of those “cultural battles” that Georgiana’s words re-enact. Through her Brown mediates the hierarchical terms inherent in interracial benevolence. The language of benevolence helps to clarify the confusion created by sentimental identification—that is, the confusion stemming from the erasure of difference between the subject and the other—by putting one group in the place of the helper/superior and the other groups in that of the helped/inferior. Through Georgiana’s mouth, however, Brown casts slaves not as those in need of help but in need of compensation for what has been wrongfully denied: African-Americans’ ownership of the nation. Assigned with religious authority “superior” to anyone else’s, including her own parson father—“whether it was admitted by the father, or not, she was his superior and his teacher” (131)—she reproves the racism of the humanitarian claims that white Americans should help Afro-Americans return to their home, Africa. To her slaves who are about to be liberated, Georgiana says:

We have been urged to send you to Liberia, but we think it wrong to send you from your native land. We did not wish to encourage the Colonization Society, for it originated in hatred of the free coloured people. Its pretences are false, its doctrines odious, its means contemptible. Now, whatever may

be your situation in life, 'Remember those in bonds as bound with them.' (182-3)

Georgiana emphatically rejects the colonizationists' pretenses for their real purpose is to deny free Afro-Americans' claim to the citizenship of the nation. Earlier in her conversation with Carlton who suggests that she should "send them to Liberia," she answers:

"Why should they go to Africa, any more than to the Free States or to Canada?" asked the wife. "They would be in their native land," he answered." Is not this their native land? What right have we, more than the negro to the soil here, or to style ourselves native Americans? Indeed it is as much their homes as ours, and I have sometimes thought it was more theirs. The negro has cleared up the lands, built towns, and enriched the soil with his blood and tears; and in return, he is to be sent to a country of which he knows nothing. Who fought more bravely for American independence than the blacks? (160)

Claiming that America belongs more to Afro-Americans than white Americans, Georgiana presents her plan to free her slaves and send them to the north not so much as philanthropy as the dispensation of justice. America could not have emerged into the nation as such without the colonial labor offered by black Americans. In Georgiana's argument that acknowledges Afro-Americans' claim to the ownership of the land they themselves cultivated—she simply can't "deny [a freed slave] in his native land"

(161)—historical justice and benevolence merge together, echoing Brown’s concerns about the problems of national belonging, benevolence, and the imperial origin of the nation.

Benevolent Empire

Emancipation intersects with empire in the antebellum discussions on slavery. For colonizationists, liberation of slaves was a means of expanding the American empire; Afro-Americans would be able to build an American “colony” once they are freed to go back to their “home.” Even those who oppose Liberian colonization could still render emancipation into an imperial task by suggesting that slavery threatens the perpetuation of an empire because it decays an empire from within. *Clotel* intervenes into both of these conversations. Brown first refutes the benevolent pretenses of colonizationists and argues that America should remove slavery so that the republic could mature into a morally sustainable empire. Tracing how *Clotel* explores the intersecting rhetorics of emancipation and empire, this section will also examine the ways in which the fiction reshapes the mythic account of America as the nation built by God’s chosen people into what could be called an abolitionist myth of Christian empire that casts abolition as coterminous with the expansion of Christendom.

The project of sending freed blacks to Africa was also a colonial project to “enable the commercial expansion of a vaster, transatlantic American empire” (Burnham 122). The American Colonization Society (ACS) presented their work as “the first step in

building an American empire” (qtd. in Burnham 122). The most famous argument for African colonization comes in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* that “constructs Liberia as a prosthetic extension of a specifically Christian and maternal American empire, a child of sorts to the mother country” (Burnham 122). Stowe herself would shift her position from African colonization to domestic emancipation in the following years after the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, but the suggestion that America expand a Christian empire through Liberia is enthusiastically taken up by another bestselling writer, Sarah Josepha Hale. A year after the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), Hale publishes *Liberia* (1853) where she proudly asserts Liberia as the colony built out of white “charity” and “philanthropy”: “What other nation can point to a colony planted from such pure motives of charity; nurtured by the counsels and exertions of its noblest, wisest, and most self-denying statesmen and philanthropists; and sustained, from its feeble commencement up to a period of self-reliance and independence, from a pure love of justice and humanity?” (iv). The “pure love of justice and humanity” demonstrated in the colonial project of Liberia shows that America is capable of absolving its own original sin by expanding the interracial benevolence into the African continent: By “providing a home of refuge for ‘the stranger within her gates,’ our beloved Union was nobly, though silently, justifying herself from the aspersions of oppression and wrong so often thrown out against her” (iv). Hale begins her book with paralleling the year 1620 with 1820: “In 1620 the first African slaves were brought to Virginia. In 1820 the first emancipated Africans were sent from the United States to Liberia” (iii). America might have been built on slavery, but it now proves to the world

that it can nurture the slaves into “emigrants returning, civilized and Christianized, to the land which, two centuries previous, their fathers had left degraded and idolatrous savages” (iii). Slavery becomes a testing ground for white Americans’ colonial capacity—the power to civilize the African “savages” into colonizers—and their interracial “charity.” Americans’ “self-denying” and philanthropic devotion to the freed blacks validate their capacity to build a benevolent empire.

A book published in the same year with *Clotel*, Hale’s text illustrates the racial and colonial reasoning of the time that Brown and many other black abolitionists were refuting. In arguing strongly against the colonization of Liberia, *Clotel* also seems to be implicitly against the imperialism behind the plan. Any American pretense to Christianize the world is false for the nation failed to Christianize itself:

“Send Bibles to the heathen;
On every distant shore,
From light that’s beaming o’er us,
Let streams increasing pour
But keep it from the millions
Down-trodden at our door.

“Send Bibles to the heathen,
Their famished spirits feed;
Oh! haste, and join your efforts,
The priceless gift to speed;

Then flog the trembling negro

If he should learn to read.” (142)

A nation that forbids “the millions” of “down-trodden” people from reading the Holy book cannot present itself as the Christian nation. Even when Brown opposes the logic of the American Colonization Society, however, he shares the similar aspirations of a Christian empire and sees abolition as the divine task required for the expansion of Christendom.

Empire is an implied context for slavery in *Clotel*. The threat that slavery poses to America is an imperial one—a threat foreboding the decay of empire. Chapter XX titled “A True Democrat” offers a lengthy argument about the connections between slavery and states through the mouth of Henry Morton. “Educated in a free state, and marrying a wife who had been a victim to the institution of slavery,” Althesa, the younger sister of Clotel, Morton is a strong opponent against “the system” (176). To his slave holding neighbors “talking loudly of the glory and freedom of American institutions” at a party, Morton asserts that “It is not our loud talk in favour of liberty that will cause us to be regarded as friends of human freedom; but our acts will be scrutinized by the people of other countries” (176). Not only is slavery a living refutation of America’s pretension to be the empire for liberty, it is also the seed for the dissolution of the nation, “the inevitable prelude to her destruction” (178). If history repeats itself, America seems to be about to repeat the history of a destroyed empire, Rome:

Behold the once proud fabric of a Roman empire--an empire carrying its arts

and arms into every part of the Eastern continent; the monarchs of mighty kingdoms dragged at the wheels of her triumphal chariots; her eagle waving over the ruins of desolated countries;--where is her splendour, her wealth, her power, her glory? Extinguished for ever. Her mouldering temples, the mournful vestiges of her former grandeur, afford a shelter to her muttering monks. Where are her statesmen, her sages, her philosophers, her orators, generals? Go to their solitary tombs and inquire? She lost her national character, and her destruction followed. (178).

Morton's warning veiled in historical reference reflects the preoccupation with Rome prevalent among nineteenth century Americans. As Nina Baym points out, "Rome stood for history itself—history as hope, history as horror and obstacle" (*American Women Writers and the Work of History* 53). George Bancroft, one of the most influential historians of the time, also used Rome as illustrating how "slavery had destroyed one of the world's greatest civilizations" and to imply that "it could do the same to the United States" (Leeman 465). In "The Decline of the Roman People" (1834), Bancroft refutes the claim that barbarians had overrun Rome, and argues that slavery in ancient Rome "had destroyed the democracy, had destroyed the aristocracy, had destroyed the empire; and at last it left the traces of its ruinous power deeply furrowed on the face of nature itself" (317). Slavery constitutes a great threat for the perpetuation of empire. Abolition then is not just a moral issue but an imperial one too. As far as America fails to purge slavery from its society, its imperial aspirations would never be realized.

Morton's warning cast in a Roman allegory that stokes the fear about the continuity of the nation is followed by the next chapter's celebration of "the seed-wheat of states and empire" of the New World. Chapter XXI, "The Christian's Death," begins with the mythic account of the birth of nation:

On the last day of November, 1620, . . . one lonely ship greets the eye of angels or of men, on this great thoroughfare of nations in our age. Next in moral grandeur, was this ship, to the great discoverer's: Columbus found a continent; the May-flower brought the seed-wheat of states and empire. That is the May-flower, with its servants of the living God, their wives and little ones, hastening to lay the foundations of nations in the occidental lands of the setting-sun. Hear the voice of prayer to God for his protection, and the glorious music of praise, as it breaks into the wild tempest of the mighty deep, upon the ear of God. Here in this ship are great and good men. Justice, mercy, humanity, respect for the rights of all; each man honoured, as he was useful to himself and others; labour respected, law-abiding men, constitution-making and respecting men; men, whom no tyrant could conquer, or hardship overcome, with the high commission sealed by a Spirit divine, to establish religious and political liberty for all. This ship had the embryo elements of all that is useful, great, and grand in Northern institutions; it was the great type of goodness and wisdom, illustrated in two and a quarter centuries gone by; it was the good genius of America.

The American history of the past “two and a quarter centuries” is depicted here as a history driven by “the high commission sealed by a Spirit divine.” The “servants of the living God,” the Pilgrims turn the imperial venture started by Columbus, “the great discoverer,” into a godly project. The vocabulary of “moral grandeur,” “justice,” “mercy,” “humanity” elevates the colonization of the New World into a noble and righteous task. The “embryo elements of all that is useful, great, and grand” brought by the “law-abiding men, constitution-making and respecting men” and implanted in New England represent “the good genius of America.” Brown’s idealistic hope for the nation relies on the idealized reconstruction of the past. To unearth the seed of an empire from the history of the Plymouth Colony, and to remember the Pilgrim Fathers as “labour respected” men, involves the repression of the memory about slavery in the settlement.

Brown appears to problematize his own celebration of the sacredness of the national past, however. Immediately after the mythic description of the birth of the Plymouth Colony, Brown begins to talk about “the first cargo of slaves on their way to Jamestown”:

But look far in the South-east, and you behold on the same day, in 1620, a low rakish ship hastening from the tropics, solitary and alone, to the New World. What is she? She is freighted with the elements of unmixed evil. Hark! hear those rattling chains, hear that cry of despair and wail of anguish, as they die away in the unpitying distance. Listen to those

shocking oaths, the crack of that fleshcutting whip. Ah! it is the first cargo
of slaves on their way to Jamestown, Virginia. (180-1)

This depiction of slavery as something foundational to the nation, the evil that coexisted with the “embryo” of national greatness seems to affirm Castronovo’s claim that Brown “understood that irony belied the moments of founding, that the meaning of American history was to be found in a legacy riddled with irony and inconsistency” (161).

According to Castronovo, Brown is one of those antebellum thinkers whom he calls “republicans”—authors who offered the way of approaching history different from the ones shaped by the prevalent, “jeremiad” assertion of the sacred national past. Rather than using the sacred past to assail “slavery as a political and moral aberration from the principles of 1776” in a way that re-affirms the national foundings, “republicans” questioned “the past [itself] that had seemed beyond reproof or censure” (161). Focusing on how Brown disrupts his culture’s “monumentalism,” Castronovo traces how his works offer “insistence that the monumental cannot wipe out discordant stains” of slavery from the nation (165). Brown might be one of those writers who insisted that the monumental pretense cannot mask the racial sins of the nation, but I am more interested in how he still works to present such sin as dissociable from the great moment of the past. Brown obviously sees that the grand national past was tainted by “the elements of unmixed evil” of slavery, but he still presents the impurity and imperfection of the national past as purifiable by geographically separating the good and evil:

Behold the Mayflower anchored at Plymouth Rock, the slave-ship in James

River. Each a parent, one of the prosperous, labour-honouring, law-sustaining institutions of the North; the other the mother of slavery, idleness, lynch-law, ignorance, unpaid labour, poverty, and duelling, despotism, the ceaseless swing of the whip, and the peculiar institutions of the South. These ships are the representation of good and evil in the New World, even to our day. When shall one of those parallel lines come to an end? (181)

America owes its birth to both “good and evil” as it has both “law-sustaining institutions of the North” and “the peculiar institutions of the South” as its “parent.” “Each a parent,” both leave contradictory legacies of freedom and enslavement “even to our day.” Even in this portrayal of the impure national origin, the repression of historical memory is still at work. Brown removes the slave-owning history from the puritan past to represent the North as the “labour-honoring” “parent.” Rather than presenting the two “institutions” of the North and the South as originating from the same root, he separates the two as “parallel lines.” As parallels, they might mirror each other, but unconnected to one another, those lines also point to the distance between the colonization motivated by greed and the mission carried out by God-fearing men. A larger history of European colonization itself is accordingly divided into “good” and “evil” colonial projects—the former being devoted to the spread of divine truth and the latter operated and maintained by the enslavement. Brown deploys the vocabulary of religious imperialism to equate the national duty of continuing the Pilgrims’ legacy with an imperial duty to spread “the

seed-wheat of states and empire” of Christianity. Out of this reconstruction of national myths abolition emerges as an imperial task to be fulfilled before the nation finally lives up to the ideals of the founders of Plymouth.

Brown renegotiates the mythic terms of the national origin to present abolition as the restoration of the Christian origin of the nation. If the above passages could be read as an “allegory . . . of the struggle between slavery and freedom in the nascent republic” (Levine, “Introduction” 27), they also constitute an allegory about a struggle between Christianity—“servants of the living God”—and non-Christian sin—“the elements of unmixed evil.” Brown offers this reflection on the link between the *Mayflower* and the first slave ship, Plymouth and Jamestown, to situate Georgiana’s “philosophy.” The above descriptions of the scene of the national birth are immediately followed by the explanation of Georgiana’s beliefs. A Southerner educated in Connecticut, Georgiana develops her ethical position by “contrasting the spirit of Christianity and liberty in New England with that of slavery in her native state” (109). Both the battle between the spirits of the North and South *and* the victory of New England’s heritage of “Christianity and liberty” combine in her person. “[H]er philosophy was founded in the school of Christianity,” and in putting the philosophy into action, she brings the nation closer to the ideal of a Christian nation that does not trample upon humanity’s God-given rights: “With respect to her philosophy—it was of a noble cast. It was, that all men are by nature equal; that they are wisely and justly endowed by the Creator with certain rights, which are irrefragable; and that, however human pride and human avarice may

depress and debase, still God is the author of good to man—and of evil, man is the artificer to himself and to his species” (181). “Georgiana’s noble philosophy differs very little from Jefferson’s” (Nabers 103), but rather than portraying her thought as Jeffersonian or American the novel casts it as inherently Christian; her heroic act, above all, is “the Christian’s victory” (184).

The emancipation of the slaves enacted by Georgiana is not so much the implementation of the national ideals elucidated by the founding father as the Christian victory over the un-Christian law of the nation. In suggesting that Georgiana differs from Jefferson in terms of her deep religious faith, the novel connects the liberation of slaves under her domain to abolition in a much wider Christian domain: the British Empire. Suggesting that Georgiana’s story compels “the professed lovers of freedom in the new world [to] see that true liberty is freedom for all,” the narrator asks that “may every American continually hear” the following poem:

Shall every flap of England’s flag
Proclaim that all around are free,
From ‘farthest Ind’ to each blue crag
That beetles o’er the Western Sea?
And shall we scoff at Europe’s kings,
When Freedom’s fire is dim with us,
And round our country’s altar clings
The damning shade of Slavery’s curse? (185)

Borrowed from John Greenleaf Whittier's "Expostulation," the insertion of the above stanza links Georgiana's efforts to "awaken our beloved country from the slumbers of death" (130) to the emancipation under "England's flag." In America, Brown has to create a fictional space to put Georgiana's noble philosophy into action, but England is already implementing it.

Georgiana's philosophy is the very philosophy that drove a real-life abolitionist from the other side of the Atlantic: William Wilberforce. In "A Visit of a Fugitive Slave to the Grave of Wilberforce," an essay published in the same year with *Clotel*, Brown reflects on the philosophy of Wilberforce, a "devoted friend of the oppressed and degraded negro race" who "removed from England the guilt of the African slave-trade, and prepared the way for the abolition of slavery in every colony of the empire" (74-75). Brown uses literally the same passage used for Georgiana to describe Wilberforce's philosophy "founded in the school of Christianity" (76). This should not be surprising to the readers familiar with Brown's "expropriative practice" (Sanborn 65) or "literary pastiche" (Levine, "Introduction" 7). Rather than dismissing it as just yet another case that shows Brown's notorious penchant for plagiarism, I want to treat the instance as indicating Brown's position on the significance of empire for transatlantic antislavery efforts. Acting upon the identical faith, Georgiana essentially performs the same work with Wilberforce, that is, the work of "add[ing] the abiding eloquence of a Christian life" to "the character of their times" ("A Visit of a Fugitive Slave to the Grave of Wilberforce" 74). If British abolitionists often relied on the rhetorical "strategy that would link the day

of grace to the beneficent and providential workings of the British Empire” (Reid-Maroney 75), Brown connects Georgiana’s efforts to “prepar[e] the way for the glorious second advent of the Messiah” for her country (128) to the imperial work of the British rule that liberated all the slaves under her imperial domain.

When most of Americans trace “the genealogy of the United States to the Pilgrims’ break with England” (Jackson 6), Brown seems to intimate that the nation should go back to its Puritan root to *reconnect* with the mother land. Brown sees the Pilgrims’ colonial work as the settlers themselves saw it: the expansion of Christendom and the British Empire. Pilgrims were *not* Americans but English immigrants in a British colony. It was only through later discourse of genealogy that “the English immigrant [was] retroactively made an American patriarch by his descendants, his life constituting part of a proto-national history by virtue of his offspring’s Americanness” (Jackson 10). To revive the Christian spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers, Brown beseeches his British readers. In the Preface, he defines the “object” of *Clotel* as “bringing British influence to bear upon American slavery” (47). The colonial root of slavery in the New World should define the character of England’s relation to it: “The fact that slavery was introduced into the American colonies, while they were under the control of the British Crown, is a sufficient reason why Englishmen should feel a lively interest in its abolition” (46-7). America might not be a colony of the British Empire any more, but culturally the two nations are closer than ever thanks to “the genius of mechanical invention [that] has brought the two countries so near together, and both having one language and one

literature, the influence of British public opinion is very great on the public of the New World” (47)⁴¹. Presented as occupying the same literary terrain of “one language” to British readers, this first Afro-American novel ends with specific suggestions as to how to exert “British public opinion.” In his “Conclusion,” Brown steps out of the fictional world he has created to address his “British Christians” directly and urges them to act to publicly denounce any denominational “fellowship [of] slaveholders professing the same common Christianity as yourselves” (226). Brown concludes his novel, appealing to the moral authority of the “British nation” to revive the Christian faith of the Pilgrims:

Finally, let the voice of the whole British nation be heard across the Atlantic, and throughout the length and breadth of the land of the Pilgrim Fathers, beseeching their descendants, as they value *the* common salvation, which knows no distinction between the bond and the free, to proclaim the Year of Jubilee. Then shall the “earth indeed yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear

⁴¹ Elisa Tamarkin situates Brown’s Anglophilia within a broader context of black abolitionists’ “fixation on aspects of British culture far removed from, and far surpassing, the political imperatives of abolition itself” (446). In treating black Anglophilia as a psychological fixation that “reveal[s] the peculiar qualities of American intellectualism at work, an intellectualism that always seems to define itself as a cosmopolitan susceptibility to other nations, and to Britain most of all” (454-5), Tamarkin unwittingly reduces the political significance of the British “Empire.” Brown might have been attached to the sociability and affability of British culture in constructing his identity as a cosmopolitan intellectual, but his attachment to British culture comes in no small part from the attraction of an empire.

Him.” (227)

In suggesting Great Britain intervene in the American matter through moral persuasion, Brown tellingly invokes the idea of an empire governing through moral example and influence as opposed to violent colonization of foreign lands. The ideal that Fuller cherished for her nation, that is, the role of a moral empire and the champion of liberty that she so eagerly wanted her nation to play, is cast here as fitting for an emancipated empire.

Implicitly reinforced through *Clotel*’s apparently typical rhetoric of abolitionism that celebrates Britain’s religious commitment is a version of imperialism that justifies imperial domain as interracial benevolence. Brown takes the typical abolitionist praise of emancipation under the British Empire further to entertain a possibility that the empire with benevolent intentions could be the best solution for slavery, and the British Empire appears to offer a readily available model. Britain has already proven that it is an empire for liberty by ensuring that everyone is free “in her Britannic Majesty’s dominions” (166). A true empire for liberty should also be a benevolent empire. Originally emerged out of the religious reform movements devoted to Christianizing America and the world, “benevolent empire” also appears to be a fitting term for the portrayal of Great Britain in *Clotel*. This rhetoric that casts the British Empire as the redeemer nation anticipates the terms used by English reformers, working for the fugitive slaves in Canada. Missionaries and the clergy working for the Church of England’s Colonial Church and School Society (CCSS) in Canada cast their charitable

activities as taking “moral leadership legitimized by [their] representing of an emancipated empire” (Reid-Maroney 76). British antislavery champions constructed a narrative in which “the sin was assuredly American” and “redemption belonged to England” which “shall extend the empire of Christ over every climate and region of the globe” (Reid-Maroney 77, 79).

The actual colonial practice of Great Britain, of course, shows that it was anything but “benevolent.” It is hard to imagine Brown, the self-avowed avid reader—“He who escapes from slavery at the age of twenty years without any education, . . . must read when others are asleep, if he would catch up with the rest of the world” (“Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown” 79)—was ignorant of the brutalities of the British Empire or the criticisms directed to them. Fuller, for example, scorned British pretension to be “the Champion of Freedom” in her *Tribune* article about “the anniversary of the Emancipation of Slaves in the West Indies.” She is “sometimes impatient of England’s brag on the subject of Slavery” (184) as she knows too well that the imperial career of the nation is neither “righteous” nor “generous”:

Her career has been one of selfish aggrandizement. To carry her flag every where where the waters flow, to leave a strong mark of her foot-print on every shore that she might return and claim its spoils, to maintain in every way her own advantage, is and has been her object as much as that of any nation on earth. The plundered Hindoo, the wronged Irish—for ourselves we must add the outraged Chinese (for we look on all that has been written as to

the right of that war as mere sophistry), no less than Napoleon, walking up and down in his 'tarred green coat' in the unwholesome lodge at St.

Helena—all can tell whether she be righteous or generous in her conquests.
(183)

Any glorification of the British Empire can be so easily refuted given the undeniable fact of imperial violence—the dispossession of the Hindoo, the oppression of the Irish, and numerous other greedy exploitations of foreign lands and labor. Brown would have been familiar with the similar anti-colonial arguments against the British Empire and would have been able to see the inconsistencies of its pretences. But in exploring the imperial promises that are more propagated than realized, *Clotel* ends up repressing the racial violence of the empire.

The way Brown relates to empire reveals the appeal it holds for the very people occupying imperial margins. Despite, or because of, “a plain historical fact, that [slavery] owes its birth to the African slave trade” (181)—a fact pointing to the inescapable link between the rise of colonial empires and slavery—empire stands as the most effective power for ensuring and perpetuating the liberation of Brown’s “my unhappy race” (226) as it is exemplified in abolition under Victoria’s domain. The discourse of empire offers a readily available vocabulary to express a utopian aspiration for the world of beneficent interracial relations in quite a similar manner that it does for the feminism of Child and Fuller. Where Fuller sees a new era of woman would arrive in the form of empire infused with feminine love, Brown expects the existing imperial hegemony to expand its

interracial benevolence.

As the nation goes through political upheavals, the “object” of *Clotel* changes too. In 1864 Brown changes the novel into *Clotelle: A Tale of the Southern States* and publishes it for Union soldiers with the “object” to “serv[e] to relieve the monotony of camp-life to the soldiers of the Union, and therefore of Liberty, and at the same time kindl[e] their zeal in the cause of universal emancipation” (104)⁴². With American soldiers already fighting for “Liberty” and “universal emancipation,” he does not need to appeal to British abolitionists any more. In 1853, however, Brown extends the religious and reformist emphasis on benevolence to the ends of empire.

Clotelle, A Colored Republican Mother

Brown expands his views on the relation between slavery and empire in his first historical writing, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (1863). In order to refute “‘natural inferiority’ of the blacks, and claim that we were destined only for a servile condition, entitled neither to liberty nor the legitimate pursuit of happiness” (5), Brown puts the question of “natural inferiority” of the enslaved race into a broader historical context of the rise and fall of empires. It is not genetically inherent “inferiority” that places one racial group under the other but the historically

⁴² This note is written not by Brown himself but James Redpath, the publisher, but the very fact that Brown allowed such note for his book suggests that this note reflects Brown’s own view too.

contingent relations of the nations that define racial hierarchies. Directly referring to “the President of the United States [who] intimated that the whites and the blacks could not live together in peace, on account of one race being superior intellectually to the other” (31), Brown calls attention to the historical fact that Lincoln is the descendant of slaves too. The president should be reminded of the history that “[t]housands of the conquered people” of the Britons under the Roman imperial rule were “sent to the slave markets of Rome, where they were sold very cheap on account of their inaptitude to learn”:

This is not very flattering to the President’s ancestors, but it is just. Cæsar, in writing home, said of the Britons, “They are the most ignorant people I ever conquered. They cannot be taught music.” Cicero, writing to his friend Atticus, advised him not to buy slaves from England, “because,” said he, “they cannot be taught to read, and are the ugliest and most stupid race I ever saw.” I am sorry that Mr. Lincoln came from such a low origin; but he is not to blame. (34)

Broadening the history of racial relations, Brown disrupts the racial discourse of Anglo-Saxonism. He urges “the white American” to remember his own colonial past:

The Britons lost their nationality, became amalgamated with the Romans, Saxons, and Normans, and out of this conglomeration sprang the proud Anglo-Saxon of to-day. I once stood upon the walls of an English city, built

by enslaved Britons when Julius Cæsar was their master. The image of the ancestors of President Lincoln and Montgomery Blair, as represented in Britain, was carved upon the monuments of Rome, where they may still be seen in their chains. Ancestry is something which the white American should not speak of, unless with his lips to the dust. (34)

Any imperial rationale based on Anglo-Saxon superiority should be false for the emergence of Anglo-Saxon itself is the product of colonial subjugation and racial amalgamation. The Anglo-Saxon race might only remember the recent history of the British Empire and the other empire emerging out of it, namely, America, but the race entered into the history of empires first as slaves “in their chains.”

Whereas Brown rewrites the Anglo-Saxon past from the perspective of their heritage in slavery, his revisions of *Clotel* indicate that he began to imagine the future of his race more in imperial terms. The changing titles of *Clotel* demonstrate the author’s changing views on the politics of gender and race. It starts out as a story about the nation’s illegitimate daughter (*Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter*) and the indictment of the failure of the founding fathers, but becomes more and more about the expanding agency of the colored heroine who survives. In the second version, *Miralda; or, the Beautiful Quadroon* (1860-61), Clotel is Isabella, and Mary—Clotel’s daughter and the only character that meets a happy ending in Europe—is Miralda whose name would change again later into Clotelle in the third and fourth versions. In the third version—*Clotelle: A Tale of the Southern States* (1864)—Brown removes all references to

Jefferson. Georgiana's importance is also more reduced than in the original version. Instead of becoming the liberator, the daughter of the slaveholding preacher becomes Clotelle's kind mistress. In the new version Georgiana dies without liberating her own slaves but Brown still uses the character to illustrate the effect of white benevolence. Becoming "more a sister than a mistress," Georgiana "unknown to her father, taught the slave-girl how to read, and did much toward improving and refining Clotelle's manners, for her own sake" (57). With the refinement acquired through the interracial friendship with Georgiana who sees that "Clotelle has a superior mind, and God intended her to hold a higher position in life than that of a servant" (62), Clotelle can so easily "sustai[n] herself in a most ladylike manner" in colonial settings (84). In the new version Clotelle is also endowed with a benevolent agency and does something similar that Georgiana did in the first version; she successfully persuades her father to liberate his slaves.

Brown spends more words on Mr. Devenant, Mary's first French husband who appears only briefly in the first version, to depict Clotelle as a cosmopolitan heroine traveling the world with him. With her husband, Captain Devenant, a renowned French officer, Clotelle leaves for "India, passing through Paris and Lyons, taking ship at Marseilles." She becomes a French lady, getting "introduced to Louis Philippe, then King of France" and in India, she is "received with honors . . . for her fascinating beauty and pleasing manners." With this added capacity to conduct herself with imperial grace, Clotelle returns to her own country in the final version where she becomes the "colored heroine" of Reconstruction.

Keeping her focus on how all of the enslaved descendants of Jefferson in *Clotel* meet tragic death except for Mary who escapes slavery in Europe, Holly Jackson argues that “*Clotel* does not imagine a happy integrated future; in fact, it does not imagine an American future at all. Rather than restoring the history of interracial relations central to American life in order to suggest a future integrated nation, [it] radically insist[s] on a break in generational reproduction that threatens the very existence of a future nation” (56). Jackson’s reading seems to be supported by the very fact that only in the 1867 version does the novel end in America. Only after Brown could imagine an interracial future for the nation, can he revise the ending for his colored heroine. In 1853 he indicts the nation through the happy ending that cannot be granted on American soil: “We can but blush for our country’s shame when we recall to mind the fact, that while George and Mary Green, and numbers of other fugitives from American slavery, can receive protection from any of the governments of Europe, they cannot return to their native land without becoming slaves” (*Clotel* 225). That the marriage of none other than Jefferson’s granddaughter would not have been sanctioned under American law is itself a strong indictment of the domestic ideology.

In his first foray into novel writing Brown exposes the racial logic of Republican Motherhood. In the last version of the novel he revisits the tenet that defined white women’s relation to the newly independent republic *to color it*; the task of reconstructing the republic from the ground up calls for a new type of a Republic Mother: a “Colored Heroine.” *Clotelle; or, The Colored Heroine* (1867) associates the

Confederacy with the Old World, presenting its attack as the attack on the “republican institutions” earned through the Revolutionary War: “The first gun fired at the American Flag, on the 12th of April, 1861, at Fort Sumter, reverberated all over Europe, and was hailed with joy by the crowned heads of the Old World, who hated republican institutions, and who thought they saw, in this act of treason, the downfall of the great American experiment” (105). With the whole Republican “experiment” under threat, Clotelle “hasten[s] home . . . to take [her] stand with the friends of liberty” (105) with her husband who comes to die on the battlefield. Left alone, Clotelle heroically fights her fight; passing as the nurse for the Confederate soldiers, she aids the Union soldiers captured by the Confederacy in their escape. During the war, “Clotelle was soon known as the ‘Angel of Mercy’” for her “heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness, and a tear for every sufferer, no matter of what color or sect,” and even after the war “this angel of humanity” remains in the south to “devote the remainder of her life” to the “education and welfare” of the “freedmen” (105, 107, 114). The reborn nation and the new people of “freedmen” call for a new model of Republican Motherhood, a “colored” one. The narrative about black women’s maternal genealogy that Brown first offered in 1853 finally comes to the definitive conclusion when the nation at last could offer his “colored heroine” a place that should rightfully belong to her: “In the summer of 1866, the Poplar Farm, on which she had once lived as a slave, was confiscated and sold by Government authority, and was purchased by Clotelle, upon which she established a Freedmen’s School, and where at this writing,—now June, 1867,—resides the ‘Angel of Mercy’” (114).

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

I began my study with C.B. Brown because his Gothic novel lets us see that the formation of American imperialism was a contested process that is neither monolithic nor concordant. As a historical phenomenon in which many Americans participated, American imperialism also reflects a complex web of desires—complex and even contradictory in the sense that it encompasses not just the pure greed for profit or land but also the desire for a better world too. If the “battle in imperialism” was not just over land but also over “who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future” (Said xii), the writers studied here all engage in the battle and show that the contest was not just between the colonizer and the colonized but also *among* the colonizers. Driven by the aspiration for the better world, the three progressive activists—Child, Fuller, W.W. Brown—imagine an empire in the hands of benevolent women who stand for freedom, love, and justice.

In expressing their political ideals in the language of empire, they also ironically anticipate the language of champions of empire today. The longing for greatness can too easily slide into the conviction of American greatness as Fuller exemplifies. A few months after the publication of *Woman*, Fuller still expresses her confidence in America’s future for “a great time was coming, and that time one of Democracy. Our country will play a ruling part” (“1st January, 1846” 332). Fuller saw America in 1845 was undergoing a “transition state [that], with all its revolting features, indicates . . . the

approach of a nobler era” (“The Wrongs of American Women. The Duty of American Women” 235). Even when Fuller was disappointed by her nation’s present condition, she held fast to her faith in the national future for she ardently wanted her nation to be such a nation that opens the new future for humanity instead of conquering and oppressing the weaker. But in expressing her moral expectation for her country she ironically ends up offering the vocabulary through which Americans could blindly believe in their self-righteousness. Take Robert Kagan, for example, a neoconservative who calls for more vigorous American leadership over the world because he believes that “the benevolent hegemony exercised by the United States” would bring “international security and prosperity” (26, 34). Fuller’s exhortation for her nation to become the leader of democracy seems to be eagerly embraced with unexpected political results by those who are ready to invade other nations in the name of democracy and liberty.

Despite their admirable commitment to the oppressed of their time, the last three writers were all attracted to the power of empire. I am not here simply trying to accuse them of naiveté. Rather than just naively buying into the illusions of empire, they simply could not imagine a world without empire—a difficulty both reflected in and created by the familial and biological metaphor for empire. As Child puts it, the “embryo” of mother England or the “infant colonies” (113) is grown into a daughter, “the American empire,” and while her beauty “nearly equal[s]” the mother’s at this moment, in her “youthful vigor” she would soon surpass her aging mother (100). As

Child naturalizes the growth and decline of empires as a kind of biological reality, she can never go far to imagine a world without empires even when she is against the ills of imperialism. When you conceive of the relation between empires and other parts of the world in terms of a parent-child relationship, it becomes as hard to imagine a world without empires as to imagine a family without a parent. A yearning for an empire of maternal protection and guidance underwrites the utopian vision of Fuller and W.W. Brown too. Again, their aspiration can so easily flow into the rationale for empire, and their language of protesting imperialism lends itself to the building of the United States, a nation that has been called “an imperialist with a history of opposing imperialism” (Immerman 13).

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